

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## BLACK SHEEP!

By THE AUTHOR OF "LAND AT LAST," "KISSING THE ROD," &c. &c.

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER V. IN THE MUIDERSTRAAT.

HIGH houses, broad, jolly, and red-faced, standing now on the edges of quays or at the feet of bridges, now in quaint trim little gardens, whose close-shaven turf is gaudy with brilliant bulbs, or overshadowed by box and yew, but always fringing the long, shallow, black canals, whose sluggish waters scarcely ripple under the passing barge. Water, water, everywhere, and requiring everybody's first consideration, dammed out by vast dykes and let in through numerous sluices, spanned by nearly three hundred bridges, employing a perfect army of men to watch it and tend it, to avail themselves of its presence and yet to keep it in subjection; for if not properly looked after and skilfully managed, it might at any moment submerge the city; avenues of green trees running along the canal banks and blooming freshly in the thickest portions of the commerce-crowded quays; innumerable windmills on the horizon; picture-galleries rich in treasures of Rubens, Rembrandt, Vandyke, and Teniers; dockyards, where square and sturdy ships are built by square and sturdy men, in solemn silence and with much pipe-smoking; asylums, homes, almshouses, through which a broad stream of well-administered charity is always flowing. A population of grave burghers, and chattering vrows, and the fattest, shiniest, and most old-fashioned children; of outlandish sailors and Jews of the grand old type, who might have sat, and whose ancestors probably did sit, as models to Rembrandt; of stalwart bargemen and canal-tenders, of strangers, some pleasure-seeking, but the great majority intent on business; for whatever may be the solemn delights of its inhabitants, to a stranger accustomed to other capitals there are few gaieties to be met with in the city to which George Dallas had wended his way—Amsterdam.

To George Dallas this mattered very little. Of the grosser kinds of pleasure he had had enough and more than enough; the better feelings of his nature had been awakened, and nothing could have induced him to allow himself to drift back into the slough from which he had

emerged. Wandering through the long picture-galleries and museums, and gloating over their contents with thorough artistic appreciation, dreamily gazing out of his hotel window over a prospect of barge-dotted and tree-towered canals which would gradually dissolve before his eyes, the beech avenue of the sycamores arising in its place, recalling Clare Carruthers's soft voice and ringing laugh and innocent trusting manner, George Dallas could scarcely believe that for months and months of his past life he had been the companion of sharpers and gamblers, and had been cut off from all communication with everything and everybody that in his youth he had been taught to look up to and respect. He shuddered as he recollected the orgies which he had taken part in, the company he had kept, the life he had led. He groaned aloud and stamped with rage as he thought of time lost, character blighted, opportunities missed. And his rage this time was vented on himself: he did not, as usual, curse his step-father for having pronounced his edict of banishment; he did not lay the blame on luck or fate, which generally bore the burden; he was man enough to look his past life fairly in the face, and to own to himself that all its past privations, and what might have been its future miseries, were of his own creation. What might have been, but what should not be now. A new career lay before him, a career of honour and fame, inducements to pursue which such as he had never dreamed of were not wanting, and by Heaven's help he would succeed.

It was on the first morning after his arrival in Amsterdam that George Dallas, after much desultory thought, thus determined. Actuated by surroundings in an extraordinary degree, he had, while in London, been completely fascinated by the combined influence of Routh and Harriet; and had he remained with them he would, probably, never have shaken off that influence, or been anything but their ready instrument. But so soon as he had left them the fascination was gone, and his eyes were opened to the degradation of his position, and the impossibility, so long as he continued with his recent associates, of retrieving himself in the eyes of the world—of being anything to Clare Carruthers. This last thought decided him—he would break with Stewart Routh; yes, and with Harriet, at once! He would sell the bracelet and send the proceeds to Routh with a letter, in which he would delicately but firmly express his determination and take

farewell of him and Harriet. Then he would return to London, and throw himself into business at once. There was plenty for him to do at *The Mercury*, the chief had said, and—No! he must not go back to London, he must not expose himself to temptation; at all events, until he was more capable of resisting it. Now, there would be Routh, with his jovial blandishments, and Deane, and all the set, and Harriet, most dangerous of all! In London he would fall back into George Dallas, the outcast, the reprobate, the black sheep, not rise into Paul Ward, the genius; and it was under the latter name that he had made acquaintance with Clare, and that he hoped to rise into fame and repute.

But though the young man had, as he imagined, fully made up his mind as to his future course, he lounged through a whole day in Amsterdam before he took the first step necessary for its pursuance—the negotiation of the bracelet and the transmission of the money to Routh—and it is probable that any movement in the matter would have been yet further delayed had he not come to the end of the slender stock of money which he had brought with him from England. The reaction from a life of fevered excitement to one of perfect calm, the atmosphere of comfortable, quiet, staid tranquillity by which he was surrounded, the opportunity for indulging his artistic sympathies without the slightest trouble, all these influences were readily adopted by a man of George Dallas's desultory habits and easy temperament; but, at last, it was absolutely necessary that some action should be taken, and George consulted the polyglot waiter of the hotel as to the best means of disposing of some valuable diamonds which he had with him.

The question was evidently one to which the polyglot waiter was well accustomed, for he answered at once, "*Dimants to puy is best by Mr. Dieverbrug, in Muiderstraat.*"

Not thoroughly comprehending the instance of the polyglottiness of the polyglot, George Dallas again advanced to the charge, and by varying his methods of attack, and diligently patching together such intelligible scraps as he rescued from the polyglot, he at length arrived at the fact that Mr. Dieverbrug, a Jew, who lived in the Muiderstraat, was a diamond merchant in a large way of business, speaking English, frequently visiting England, and likely to give as good, if not a better price than any one else in the trade. The polyglot added that he himself was not a bad judge of what he persisted in calling "*dimants*;" and as this speech was evidently a polite hint, George showed him the stones. The polyglot admired them very much, and pronounced them, in his opinion, worth between two and three hundred pounds—a valuable hint to George, who expected Mr. Dieverbrug would call upon him to name his price, and if any absurd sum was asked, the intending vendor might be looked upon with suspicion. The polyglot then owned that he himself frequently did a little business in the way of jewel-purchasing

from visitors to the hotel, but frankly confessed that the "*lot*" under consideration was beyond him; so George thanked him and set out to visit Mr. Dieverbrug.

The Muiderstraat is the Jews' quarter of Amsterdam, which said, it is scarcely necessary to add that it is the dirtiest, the foulest, the most evil-smelling. There all the well-known characteristics of such places flourish more abundantly even than in the Frankfort Judengasse or our own Houndsditch. There each house is the repository of countless suits of fusty clothes, heaped up in reckless profusion on the floors, bulging out from cupboards and presses, horribly suggestive of vermin, hanging from poles protruded from the windows. There every cellar bristles with an array of boots of all kinds and shapes, amongst which the little Hebrew children squall, and fight, and play at their little games of defrauding each other. There are the bric-à-brac shops, crammed with cheap odds and ends from every quarter of the globe, all equally undistinguishable under an impartial covering of dust and dirt; there are the booksellers, with their wormeaten folios and their copies of the Scriptures, and their written announcements in the Hebrew character; there are the cheap print-sellers, with smeary copies from popular pictures and highly-coloured daubs of French battle-fields and English hunting-scenes. The day was fine, and nearly all the population was either standing outside its doors or lolling at its windows, chaffering, higgling, joking, scolding. George Dallas, to whom such a scene was an entire novelty, walked slowly along with difficulty, threading his way through the various groups, amused with all he saw, and speculating within himself as to the probable personal appearance of Mr. Dieverbrug. The diamond-merchant, George imagined, would probably be an old man, with grey hair and spectacles, and a large hooked nose, like one of Rembrandt's "*Misers*," seated in a small shop, surrounded by the rarest treasures exquisitely set. But when he arrived at the number which the polyglot had given him as Mr. Dieverbrug's residence, he found a small shop indeed, but it was a bookseller's, and it was not until after some little time that he spied a painted inscription on the door-post, directing Mr. Dieverbrug's visitors to the first floor, whither George at once proceeded.

At a small wooden table, on which stood a set of brass balance weights, sat a man of middle height and gentlemanly appearance, dressed in black. The Hebraic character was not strongly marked in any of his features, though it was perceptible to an acute observer in the aquiline nose and the full red lips. He raised his eyes from a small red leather memorandum-book or diary which he had been studying as Dallas entered the room, and gave his visitor a grave salutation.

"Am I addressing Mr. Dieverbrug?" said Dallas, in English.

"I am Mr. Dieverbrug," he replied, in the same language, speaking with perfect ease and

with very little foreign accentuation, "at your service."

"I have been recommended to come to you. I am, as you have probably already recognised, an Englishman, and I have some jewels for sale, which it may, perhaps, suit you to buy."

"You have them with you?"

"Yes, they are here;" and George took out his cherished case and placed it in Mr. Dieverbrug's hand.

Mr. Dieverbrug opened the case quietly, and walked with it towards the window. He then took out the stones and held them to the light, then taking from his waistcoat-pocket a small pair of steel nippers, he picked up each stone separately, breathed upon it, examined it attentively, and then replaced it in the case. When he had gone through this operation with all the stones, he said to George:

"You are not a diamond merchant?"

"No, indeed!" said Dallas, with a half-laugh; "not I."

"You have never," said Mr. Dieverbrug, looking at him steadfastly from under his bushy eyebrows—"you have never been in a jewel-house?"

"In a jewel-house?" echoed George.

"What you call a jeweller's shop?"

"Never have been in a jeweller's shop? Oh yes, often."

"Still you fail my meaning. You have never been in a jeweller's shop as employé, as assistant?"

"Assistant at a jeweller's—ah, thank you! now I see what you're aiming at. I've never been an assistant in a jeweller's shop, you ask, which is a polite way of inquiring if I robbed my master of these stones! Thank you very much; if you've that opinion of me, perhaps I had better seek my bargain elsewhere." And George Dallas, shaking all over, and very much flushed in the face, extended his hand for the case.

Mr. Dieverbrug smiled softly as he said, "If I had thought that, I would have bid you go about your business at once. There are plenty of merchants at Amsterdam who would buy from you, no matter whence you came; but it is my business to ask such questions as to satisfy myself. Will you have back your diamonds, or shall I ask my questions?"

He spoke in so soft a tone, and he looked so placid and so thoroughly unaring which way the discussion ended, that George Dallas could scarcely forbear laughing as he replied, "Ask away!"

"Ask away," repeated Mr. Dieverbrug, still with his soft smile. "Well, then, you are not a jeweller's employé; I can tell that by your manner, which also shows me that you are not what you call swell-mob-man—rascal—escroc. So you come to me with valuable diamonds to sell; my questions are. How do you get these diamonds? Who are you?"

For an instant George Dallas paused in his reply, while he felt the blood rise in his cheeks. He next looked Mr. Dieverbrug straight in the

face as he said, "These were family diamonds. I inherited them from my mother—who is dead—and I was advised to come over here to sell them, this being the best market. As to myself, I am a literary man, a contributor to newspapers, and an author."

"Ah, ha! you write in newspapers and books? You are feuilletonist, author?" And as Mr. Dieverbrug said these words, he took up a stick which stood by the side of the fireplace and thumped heavily on the floor. His thumping seemed to awaken a kind of smothered response from the regions below them, and before George Dallas had recovered from his surprise the door was opened, and an old gentleman of fantastic appearance entered the room—a very little man, with an enormous head, which was covered with a tight-fitting little skull-cap, large eyes glaring out of silver-rimmed spectacles, a sallow puckered face fringed with a short stubby white beard, a large aquiline nose, and thin tight lips. Buttoning immediately under his chin and reaching to his feet—no very long distance—the little man wore a greasy red flannel gaberline dressing-gown, with flat horn buttons in a row down the front, underneath which appeared a dubiously dirty pair of flannel stockings and bright red leather slippers. With one hand the little man leaned on an ivory-handled crutch stick; in the other he carried a yellow-paper covered book—Tauchnitz edition of some English author. As he entered the room he gave a sharp, rapid, comprehensive glance at George through his spectacles, made him a deferential bow, and then took up his position in the closest proximity to Mr. Dieverbrug, who at once addressed him in Dutch with such volubility that George, who had managed to pick up a few words during his stay, from the polyglot and others, failed to comprehend one syllable of what passed between them.

When they had finished their parley, during which both of them looked at the diamonds and then at George, and then waved their fingers in each other's faces, and beat the palms of their hands, and shrugged their shoulders as though they never intended their heads to be again seen, Mr. Dieverbrug turned to George, and said, "This is my brother-in-law, Mr. Schaub, who keeps the bookseller's shop beneath us. He is agent for some English booksellers and newspapers, and knows more about authors than you would think. I should be glad if you would have some talk with him."

"Glad I should have some talk with him?" George Dallas commenced in wonderment; but Mr. Schaub cut in at once:

"Ye-es! Vos glad should have tokes mit eem! Should mit eem converse—sprehen, dis English author!"

"English author?"

"M-ja! m-ja! Wass him, der Schaub"—tapping himself in the middle of his greasy breast with his ivory-handled crutch—"a-agent von Tauchnitz, Galignani, die London Times, die Mercury, and von all. Wass der Schaub

knows all, and der Mynheer is English author, der Schaub must know von the Mynheer!"

George Dallas looked at him for a few moments in great bewilderment, then turned to Mr. Dieverbrug. "Upon my honour," he said, "I should be delighted to carry out your wish and have some talk with this old gentleman, but I don't see my way to preventing the conversation being all on his side. The fact is, I don't understand one word he says!"

With the old sly smile, Mr. Dieverbrug said, "My brother-in-law's talk is perhaps somewhat idiomatic, and one is required to be used to it. What he would convey is, that he, acquainted as he is with English literature and journalism, would like to know what position you hold in it, what you have written, where you have been engaged, and such-like. It is no object of us to disguise to you that he brings his experience to aid me in deciding whether or not I consider myself justified in making a dealing with you for these stones."

"Thanks! I comprehend perfectly, and, of course, cannot object; though," added George, with a smile, "I am afraid I have not as yet made sufficient mark in English literature to render me a classic, or even to have gained a continental reputation for my name. Stay, though. Mr. Schaub, if I understood him rightly, represented himself as agent for one London paper to which I have contributed under my signature—the Mercury. You know the Mercury, Mr. Schaub? I thought so, and perhaps you have seen some articles there signed Paul Ward?"

"M-ja! m-ja! Wass von die 'Strangers in London,' von Paul Ward, am Nordjten, Hollandischen, Deutschen sea-people, von zailors would call zum visitiren?"

"That's it, sir! Descriptions," continued George, turning to Mr. Dieverbrug, "of the foreign sea-going populations of London."

"M-ja, of Highway, of Shadcliffe, Ratcliffe, Shadwell, vot you call! M-ja, of Paul Ward writings I am acquaint."

"And you are Paul Ward?" asked Mr. Dieverbrug.

"I am that apparently distinguished person," said George.

Then Mr. Dieverbrug and Mr. Schaub plunged pell-mell into another conversation, in which, though the tongues rattled volubly enough, the shoulders, and the eyebrows, and the fingers played almost as important parts, the result being that Mr. Dieverbrug turned to George and said, "I am quite satisfied to undertake this affair, Mr. Ward, from what my brother-in-law has said of your position. Another question is, what shall I give you for the stones?"

"From what your brother-in-law has said of my position, Mr. Dieverbrug," said George, "it will, I presume, be apparent to you that I am not likely to be much versed in such matters, and that I must, to a great extent, be dependent on you."

"But you have some notion of price?"

"I have a notion—nothing more."

"And that notion is——?"

"Well, I imagine the worth of the stones is about two hundred and fifty pounds!"

At these words Mr. Schaub gave a short sharp scream of horror, plunging his hands up to the elbows in the pockets of the red flannel gaberdine, and glaring at George through the silver-rimmed glasses. Mr. Dieverbrug was not so wildly affected; he only smiled the soft smile a little more emphatically than before, and said:

"There is now no doubt, my dear sir, even if we had doubted it before, of your living in the region of romance! These must be Monte Christo diamonds, of M. Dumas's own setting, to judge by the value you place on them—eh?"

"Wass won hondert fifty is vat worths," said Mr. Schaub.

But, fortified in his own mind by the opinion of the polyglot waiter, who evidently had not spoken without some knowledge, George at once and peremptorily declined his bid, and so to work they went. The stones were had out again, re-examined, weighed in the brass balances, breathed upon, held up to the light between the steel pincers, and, at length, after a sharp discussion, carried on with most vivid pantomime between the brothers-in-law, Mr. Dieverbrug consented to buy them for one hundred and eighty pounds, and George Dallas accepted his offer. Then from the recesses of a drawer in the little wooden table Mr. Dieverbrug produced a cash-box and counted out the sum in Dutch coin and gulden notes, and handing it to George; and shaking hands with him, the transaction was completed.

Completed, so far as Mr. Dieverbrug was concerned; but Mr. Schaub had yet an interest in it. That worthy followed George Dallas down the stairs, and, as he would have made his exit, drew him into the bookseller's shop—a dark dirty den of a place, with old mildewed folios littering the floor, with new works smelling of print and paper ranged along the counter, with countless volumes pile on pile heaped against the walls. With his skinny yellow hand resting on George's sleeve, the old man stood confronting George in the midst of the heterogeneous assemblage, and peering up into his face through the silver-rimmed glasses, said:

"And so he vos Paul Vart—eh? Dis young man vos Paul Vart, von London aus? And Paul Vart vill back to London, and Hollandisch money no good there—eh? Best change for English, and der old Schaub shall change for eem—eh?"

"I'm not going back to London, Mr. Schaub," said George, after a few moments' puzzling over the old man's meaning. "I'm not going back to London; but I shall want to change this money, as I must send some of it, the larger portion, to England by to-night's post, and I am going to the bank to change it."

"Wass! der bank! der nonsense! It is the old Schaub vot will change! Give de goot rates and all! Ach, der old Schaub vot has der English bank-note to send mit dem posttrager!"



Der old Schaub vot den miser dey call! Der Schaub vill change die gulden for den bank-notes, m-ja?"

"It does not matter to me much who changes it, so long as I get the proper value!" said George, with a laugh, "and if the old Schaub, as you call yourself, can give me bank-notes for a hundred and forty pounds, I'll say done with you at once!"

"Wass vat was 'done' mit me for hundert forty pounds! See—first will make the door to. Let das folk call miser old Schaub, but not let das folk see vot old Schaub misers. Ha, ha!"

So saying, the old gentleman closed the door of the shop and locked it carefully. Then he retired to the back of the counter, removed several heavy old books from one of the shelves, and unlocked a secret closet in the wall. When he turned again to George, whom he had left on the other side of the counter, he had a little roll of English bank-notes in his hand. From this he selected four notes—two of the value of fifty and two of twenty pounds. These he handed to Dallas, receiving the equivalent in Dutch money.

"I am very much obliged to you indeed, Mr. Schaub," said George. "By doing this for me, you've saved my going to the bank, and a good deal of trouble."

"Obliged to him is not at all, mein goot freund Vart—Paul Vart," said the old gentleman. "Miser das folk calls old Schaub, but it is not that; he has his leetle commissions, vy not he as well as banks? Goot deal of money pass through old Schaub's hands, and of vot pass none go clean through, always von little shticks to him fingers!"

That night George Dallas wrote to Stewart Routh, enclosing him the money, and telling him that literary engagements had sprung up which might perhaps keep him some little time from London. The letter despatched, he felt a different man. The tie was loosed, the coupling-chain was broken! No longer enthralled by a debt of gratitude to vice, he could try what he could do to make a name—a name which his mother should not blush to hear—a name which should be murmured with delight by Clare Carruthers!

#### CHAPTER VI. IDLESSE.

WHEN George Dallas had relieved his conscience by despatching the money to Routh, he felt that he had sufficiently discharged a moral duty to enable him to lie fallow for a little time and reflect upon the excellence of the deed, without immediately pushing forward on that career of stern duty which he had prescribed for himself. In his desultory frame of mind, it afforded him the greatest pleasure to sit apart in the quaintly trimmed gardens or on the shady quays idly looking on the life passing before him, thinking that he was no longer in the power of those who had so long exercised an evil influence over him, and recollecting that

out of the balance of the sum which he had received from Mr. Dieverbrug he had enough left to keep him without any absolute necessity for resorting to work for some little time to come. For George Dallas was essentially an idler and a dreamer, an intending well-doer, but steeped to the lips in procrastination, and without the smallest knowledge of the realities of life. He had hopes and ambitions, newly kindled as one might say; honest aspirations, such as in most men would have proved spurs to immediate enterprise; but George Dallas lay about on the seats of the public gardens, or leaned against the huge trees bordering the canals, and as he puffed into the air the light blue smoke and watched it curling and eddying above his head, he thought how delightful it would be to see Clare Carruthers blushing with delight at his literary success; he pictured himself telling her how he had at last succeeded in making a name, and how the desire of pleasing her had been his greatest incentive; he saw his mother trembling and joyous, his step-father with his arms open and his cheque-book at his step-son's disposal; he had a dim vision of Amherst church, and flower-strewing maidens, and ringing bells, and cheering populace;—and then he puffed out a little more smoke, and thought that he really must begin to think about getting into harness again.

As a first step to this desirable result, he paid his bill at the Amsterdam hotel and started off for the Hague, where he remained for a fortnight, enjoying himself in the laziest and pleasantest manner, lounging in the picture-gallery and the royal library, living remarkably well, smoking a great deal, and thinking about Clare Carruthers, and in odd half hours, after breakfast or before he went to bed, doing a little literary work, transcript of his day's observations, which he sent to *The Mercury* with a line to Grafton Leigh, telling him that private affairs had necessitated his coming abroad, but that when he returned he would keep the promise he had made of constant contributions to the paper; meanwhile, he sent a few sketches just to keep his hand in. In reply to this letter he received a communication from his friend Cunningham, telling him that his chief was much pleased with the articles, and would be glad, as George was so near, if he would go over to Amsterdam and write an account of the starting of the fleet for the herring-fishery—an event which was just about to come off, and which, owing to special circumstances at the time, excited a peculiar interest in England. In this letter, Cunningham enclosed another, which he said had been for some time lying at the office, and which, on opening, George found to be from the proprietors of *The Piccadilly*, presenting their compliments to Mr. Paul Ward, stating that they were recommended by their "literary adviser," who was much struck by the brilliancy and freshness of so much of Mr. Paul Ward's serial story as had been sent in, to accept that story for their magazine, regretting that Mr. Ward's name was not yet sufficiently well known to enable

them to give the sum he had named as his price, but offering him, on the whole, very handsome terms.

So, it had come at last! No longer to struggle on, a wretched outsider, a component of the "ruck" in the great race for name, and fame, and profit, but one of the select, taking the leading place in the leading periodical of the day, with the chance, if fortune favoured him, and he could only avail himself of the opportunity so long denied, and call into action the influences so long prompting him, of rendering himself from month to month an object of interest, a living something, an actual necessity to thousands of people whose faces he should never see, and who would yet know of him and look with the deepest interest on the ideal creatures of his fancy. Pardon the day-dream now, for the good to be derived from action is now so real, so tangible, that the lotos-leaves shall soon be cast aside. And yet how fascinating is the vision which their charm has ever evoked for the young man bound under their spell! Honour, wealth, fame, love! not all your riches, Capel Carruthers, not your county position, not your territorial influence, not your magisterial dignity, nor anything else on which you pride yourself, shall be half as sweet to you as the dignified pride of the man who looks around him, and seeing himself possessed of all these enviable qualities, says: "By my own hand, by the talent which God has given me, and by his help alone, unaided by birth, or riches, or influence, I have made myself what I am!" The crisis in George Dallas's life had arrived, the ball was at his feet, and with the opportunity so urgent on him, all his desultoriness, all his lazy dilettantism, vanished. He felt at last that life was real and earnest, and determined to enter upon it at once. With what big schemes his heart was filled, with what quixotic dreams his brain was bursting! In his own mind his triumphant position in the future was so assured, that he could not resist taking an immediate foretaste of his happiness, and so on the very day of the receipt of Cunningham's letter a box containing some very rare Japanese fans, screens, and china, was despatched anonymously, addressed to Miss Carruthers. The cost of these trifles barely left George Dallas enough to pay his fare back to Amsterdam. But what of that? Was he not on the high road to fortune, and could he not make money as he liked?

The polyglot waiter received him, if not with open arms, at least with a smiling face and a babble of many-tongued welcomes, and placed in his hands a letter which had been more than a week awaiting him. George glanced at its superscription, and a shadow crossed his face as he recognised Routh's handwriting. He had looked upon that connexion as so completely cut asunder, that he had forgotten his last communication necessitated a reply—an acknowledgment of the receipt of the money at least—and he opened the letter with an undefined sensation of annoyance. He read as follows:

S. M. Street, June —, 18—.

"Your letter, my dear George, and its enclosure is 'to hand,' as we say in Tokenhouse-yard, and I flatter myself that you, who know something of me, and who have seen inside my waistcoat, know that I am highly pleased at the return you have made for what you ridiculously term my 'enormous kindness,' and at the feeling which has prompted you, at, I am certain, some self-sacrifice, to return me the sum which I was only too pleased to be able to place at your disposal. I am a bad hand, as you, great author, literary swell, &c. &c., will soon see—I am a bad hand at fencing off what I have got to say, and therefore I must out with it at once. I know it ought to be put in a postscript—just dropped par hasard, as though it were an afterthought and not the real gist of the letter—but I do not understand that kind of 'caper,' and so must say what I have got to say in my own way. So look here! I am ten years older than you in years and thirty years in experience, and I know what heart-burnings and worries, not merely for yourself alone, but for others very very dear to you, you have had in raising this money which you have sent to me. You thought it a debt of honour, and consequently moved heaven and earth to discharge it, and you knew that I was hard up—a fact which had an equally irritating effect on you. Now, look here! (I have said that before, I see; but never mind!) As to the honour—Well, not to mince matters, it was a gambling debt, pur et simple; and when I reflect, as I do sometimes—Harriet knows that, and will tell you so—I know well enough that but for me you would never have been led into gambling. I am not preaching, old fellow; I am simply speaking the honest truth. Well, the thought that you have had all this to go through, and such a large sum of money to pay, yerks me and goes against the grain. And then, as to my being hard up, I don't mind telling you—of course in the strictest confidence—that Tokenhouse-yard is a tremendous success! It was a tight time some months ago, and no mistake; but I think we have weathered the storm, and the money is rolling in there splendidly; so splendidly and so rapidly, that—again in the strictest confidence—I am thinking of launching out a little and taking up the position which—you'll know I'm not bragging, old boy—my birth and education warrant me in assuming. I have grovelled on long enough, Heaven knows, and I want to see myself, and, above all, I want to see my wife, out of the reach of—Well, I need not dilate to you on what circumstances have lowered us to, and what we will now float above. So, as good luck is nothing unless one's friends share in it, I want to say to you, as delicately as I can, 'Share in mine!' Don't be in a hurry to send me back that money, don't be too proud—that's not the word, George—I should say, don't fear to remain in my debt, and, if occasion should arise, let me be your banker for further sums. I can stand

the racket, and shall be only too glad to be called upon to do so, as some slight way of atoning for having led you into what cannot be looked upon by any one, I am afraid, as a reputable life. I won't say any more on this head, because there is no need. You will know that I am in earnest in what I have said, and you will receive the fifty pounds which I have enclosed herein in the spirit in which they are sent—that of true friendship. You will be a great gun some day, if you fulfil the promise made for you by those who ought to know about it; and then you will repay me. Meanwhile, depend on it that any draft of yours on me will be duly honoured.

"And so you are not coming back to London for some time? It seems an ungenerous thing in a friend to say, but upon my soul I think it the wisest thing you can do is to remain abroad, and widen your knowledge of life. You have youth and health, at your time of life the powers of observation are at their freshest and strongest, all you will want is money, and that you shan't want, if you accede to the suggestion I have just made. You will store your mind in experience, you will see all sorts and varieties of men, and as you have nothing particular to bind you to England, you could thoroughly enjoy your freedom, and return with a valuable stock of ideas for the future benefit of the British reading public. *Allez toujours, la jeunesse!* which, under its familiar translation of 'Go it while you're young!' is the best advice I can give you, George, my dear boy. During your absence, you will have shaken off all your old associations, and who knows but that the great bashaw, your step-father, may clasp you to his bosom, and leave all his acres to his dearly beloved step-son, G. D.? Only one thing! You must not forget Harry, and you must not forget me! If all works right, you will find us very differently situated from what you have ever known us, and you won't be ashamed to recognise us as friends. You would laugh if you could see me now, emphatically a 'City man,' wearing Oxford mixture trousers and carrying a shabby fat umbrella, which is an infallible sign of wealth, eating chops in the middle of the day, solemnly rebuking my young clerks for late attendance at the office, and comporting myself generally with the greatest gravity and decorum. And to think that we once used to 'back the easter,' and have, in our time, held point, quint, and quatorze. Tell it not in Gath! By advices last received, the produce of the mines has been twenty-two thousand oitavas, the gain whereof is, &c. &c. That's the style now!

"Harriet is well, and, as ever, my right hand. To see her at work over the books at night, one would think she had been born in the Brazils, and had never heard of anything but silver mines. She sends kindest regards, and is fully of my opinion as to the expediency of your staying away from London. No news of Deane; but that does not surprise me. His association with us was entirely one of concurrence, and he always talked of himself as a wanderer—a bird

of passage. I suppose he did not give you any hint of his probable movements on the day of the dinner, when I had the ill-luck to offend him by not coming? No one ever knew where he lived, or how, so I can't make any inquiries. However, it's very little matter.

"And now I must make an end of this long story. Good-bye, my dear George. All sorts of luck, and jollity, and happiness attend you, but in the enjoyment of them all don't forget the pecuniary proposition I have made to you, and think sometimes kindly of

"Your sincere

"STEWART ROUTH."

A little roll of paper had dropped from the letter when George opened it. He picked it up, and found two Bank of England notes for twenty pounds, and one for ten pounds.

It is no discredit to George Dallas to avow that when he had finished the perusal of this quaint epistle, and when he looked at its enclosure, he had a swelling in his throat, a quivering in the muscles of his mouth, and thick heavy tears in his eyes. He was very young, you see, and very impressionable, swaying hither and thither with the wind and the stream, unstable as water, and with very little power of adhering to any determination, however right and laudable it seemed at the first blush. There are few of us—in early youth, at all events, let us trust—who are so clear-headed, and far-seeing, and right-hearted, as to be able to do exactly what Duty prescribes to us—the shutting out all promptings of inclination! Depend upon it the good boys in the children's story-books, those juvenile patterns who went unwaveringly to the Sunday-school, shutting their eyes to the queen-cakes and toffy so temptingly displayed on the roadside, and who were adamant in the matter of telling a fib, though by so doing they might have saved their schoolfellow a flogging—depend upon it they turned out, for the most part, very bad men, who robbed the orphans and ground the faces of the widows. George Dallas was but a man, very warm-hearted, very impressionable, and when he read Stewart Routh's letter he repented of his harshness to his friend, and accused himself of having been precipitate and ungenerous. Here was the blackleg, the sharper, the gambler, actually returning some of his legitimate winnings, and placing his purse at his acquaintance's disposal, while his step-father—But then that would not bear thinking about! Besides, his step-father was Clare's uncle; no kindness of Routh's would ever enable him, George, to make progress in that direction, and therefore—And yet it was deuced kind in Routh to be so thoughtful. The money came so opportunely, too, just when, what with his Hague excursion and his purchases, he had spent the balance of the sum derived from the sale of the bracelet, and it would have been scarcely decent to ask for an advance from The Mercury office or The Piccadilly people. But it was a great thing that Routh advised him to keep away from Eng-

land for a time—a corroboration, too, of Routh's statement that he was going into a different line of life—for of course with his new views an intimacy with Routh would be impossible, whereas he could now let it drop quietly. He would accept the money so kindly sent him, and he would do the account of the herring fishery for *The Mercury*, and he would get on with the serial story for *The Piccadilly*, and—Well, he would remain where he was and see what turned up. The quiet, easy-going, dreamy life suited George to a nicety; and if he had been a little older, and had never seen Clare Carruthers, he might, on very little provocation, have accepted the Dutch far niente as the realisation of human bliss.

So, having to remain in Holland for some few days longer, and needing some money for immediate spending, George Dallas bethought him of his old friend Mr. Schaub, and strolled to the *Muiderstraat* in search of him. He found the old gentleman seated behind his counter, bending over an enormous volume in the Hebrew character, over the top of which he glared through the silver-rimmed spectacles at his visitor with anything but an inviting glance. When, however, he recognised George, which he did comparatively quickly, his forbidding look relaxed, he put down the book, and began nodding in a galvanised manner, rubbing the palms of his hands together, and showing the few fangs left in his mouth.

"Vat! Vart—Paul Vart! you here still? Wass you not back gone to your own land, Vart? You do no more vairs, Vart, you vaste your time in Amsterdam, Vart—Paul Vart!"

"No; not that," said George, laughing; "I have not gone home, certainly, but I've not lost my time. I've been seeing to your country and studying character. I've been to the Hague."

"Ja, ja! the Hague! and, like your countrymen, you have bought their die Japans, die dogues, and punch-bowls. Ja, ja!"

George admitted the fact as to japan-ware and china dogs, but denied the punch-bowls.

"Ja, ja!" groaned Mr. Schaub; "and here in dis house I could have sold you straight same, de straight same, and you save your money for journey to Hague."

"Well, I haven't saved the money," said George, with a laugh, "but I dare say I shall be able to make something of what I saw there. You'll be pleased to hear I am going to write a story for *The Piccadilly*—they've engaged me."

"Wass Peek-a-teelies wass goot, ver goot," said Mr. Schaub; "better as *Mercury*—bigger, higher, more stand!"

"Ah! but you mustn't run down *The Mercury*, either. They've asked me to write a description of the sailing of your herring-fleet. So I must stop here for a few days, and I want you to change me a Bank of England note."

"Ja, ja! with pleasure! Wass always likes dis Bank of England notes; ist goot, and clean, and so better as dirty Austrisch Prussich money. Ah! he is not the same as I give you

other day! He is quite new and clean for twenty pounds! Ja, ja!" he added, after holding the note up to the light, "his vater-mark is raicht! A. F.! Vot is A. F., 17 April? Ah, you don't know! You don't become it from A. F.? Course not! Vell, vell, let me see die course of 'Change—denn I put him into my leetle stock von English bank-note!"

The old man took up a newspaper that lay on the counter before him and consulted it, made a rapid calculation on a piece of paper, and was about to turn round towards the drawer where, as George remembered, he kept his cash-box, when he stopped, handed George the pen from behind his ear, dipped it into the ink, and said:

"Vell, just write his name, Vart—Paul Vart, on his back—m-ja? And his date of month. So! Vart—Paul Vart!—m-ja! ist goot. Here's die guldens."

George Dallas swept the gold pieces into his pocket, nodded to the old man, and left the shop. Mr. Schaub carefully locked away the note, made an entry of its number and amount in his ledger, and resumed his reading.

### THE SOLDIER TIRED.

ABOUT eleven o'clock on the morning of the eighth of September last, an old and bent man, of uncertain gait, feebly felt his way with a stick, along an unfamiliar path. It was the veteran *Waterloo-man*,\* whose history was told in these pages in August last, taking his departure from the "House," in which he had been permitted to pass some six years of his old age, as a national reward for fighting against "Boney" in his youth.

The old man's dress was as quaint as his gait. A blue pilot overcoat, much too long for him, and all "mote-eaten," as he described it, formed the principal feature. A long-furred imitation beaver hat, brushed backwards, a pair of yellow corduroys, a blue cotton necktie, a small bundle, and a gnarled and knotted walking-stick, completed the costume. These clothes would have been a little singular at any time; but there was an air about them not belonging to other clothes of even the same kind. They had been laid up in the workhouse stores of "paupers' own clothes" for six years; and, naturally, they wore an unnatural air.

The wearer of these singular habiliments picked his way—he is three-parts blind—to the writer's house, where his outer man was photographed, and his inner man refreshed. Subsequently he was supplied with two sets of every article necessary in the way of clothing from a convenient "ready-made" shop; a fortnight's temporary allowance was paid him; and, while he was waiting for the carrier to call and take him and his new stock of clothes to his native village, he had a word or two to say.

\* See *WATERLOO AND THE WORKHOUSE*, page 125 of the present volume.



"Well, sir, the first thing as I heard about going out was early a Sunday morning [19th of August], when Mr. Nameless says to me, 'Why, Oliver, you seems to find yourself discontented and dissatisfied here.'"

"No, sir," I says; "I ain't discontented nor yet dissatisfied."

"He says: 'You'll not get provided for as well as you are here, under ten shillings a week.'"

"I says: 'I can get provided for very cheap out.'"

"'You ain't wanted out,' he says. He seemed ruffled, like; but he have been very mild w<sup>th</sup> me since, and shook hands w<sup>th</sup> me when I came out."

"It wasn't the food altogether as made me want to get out. I am getting old and feeble, and should often be glad to lay an extry hour in the morning when I don't feel well. But you must be *very* bad here to be allowed to lay in bed beyond the reg'lar time. Besides, I so longed to be with my own people—partickler a Sunday."

"Next Monday morning—that is, Monday week [August 27]—Nameless came to me and said, 'You're to go to Oxford next Monday.' I was a little frustrated, for I didn't know what it was about; and it was said as if I was to go for doing summut wrong. But I knowed as I hadn't done nothing wrong. By-and-by I see the poorter, and he tells me as the sergeant had been there a speaking to him. After I'd seen the poorter, I thought my going to Oxford had something to do with what you was a-telling me on; and I was a little more reconciled."

"Next day was board-day, and the gentlemen came round. One asked me, 'Was I discontented? Why did I wish to go out?'"

"No, sir," I says, "I ain't discontented; but I should like to lie down in peace in my native village, and be with those as is dear to me."

"On the 3rd of September, as you know, sir, I went to Oxford. The sergeant and me walked to the station—pretty well three miles I should think it is. We went by the railway to Oxford. It was the first time as I'd travelled by steam."

"I hadn't been to Oxford for twenty years, and I was quite frustrated by the buildings. We waited at the pay-office till two o'clock [to see the staff officer of pensioners], and as I had my breakfast about six o'clock, I came over faint-like; but the sergeant fetched me a glass of beer. That refreshed me: and I went afore the gentlemen. They asked me lots of questions, and I told 'em all they wanted to know. One of the gentlemen said it was all satisfactory, and the other told me as I didn't seem to have lost my memory, anyhow."

"We went, the sergeant and me, up into the town, and had our dinner, and come home by the train, about four o'clock. I walked up again the three miles from the station; and out-and-out tired I was. But I was all right next day."

"I looks forward to going home, although my generation be mostly dead. I allys was very fond of my native village. Many's the time

I've been there in a dream when I've been in the workhouse—sometimes underground a slate-making—sometimes at church—sometimes at home. I'm used to the church and churchyard, and I looks forward to worshipping in my old church, although I shall always think of the little chapel when the time comes round. Ever since I were quite a little boy I used to sing till I went for a soldier; and I were up in the gallery again as soon as I come back from soldiering, till my voice went away. But I must listen to the others now. My wife and three children lies buried in the churchyard, and all of both our families, hern and mine. At the back of the church is the grave of the young woman I spoke about, who I kept company with before I went away to Waterloo. She died in August, '18, and I come back home in November, '18. It's nigh on fifty year ago; but well I recollects the first thing I did when I come back home and found her gone. I'd thought of her at Waterloo, and I was like a child. I went and lay down by her grave and cried amain, I did. Her father and mother died about ten or twelve years afterwards; and I don't know if there is any of the family left now. I shall soon be laid in the ground with them all. Many's the thought of happiness I feel at having my liberty once more. But I think what cheers me most of all things is the thought that I shall be off the ratepayers' list, and that when I come to die, I shan't be buried by the parish."

And so went home to his village this veteran soldier. A word about how he came to have the happiness of going there.

A well-wisher of the old man was fortunate enough to be allowed to state his case in a letter to the editor of the Times, on the 18th of August last. On the 21st, he received a letter from the Secretary of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, requesting him to furnish to "the Lords and other Commissioners" of the hospital such information as it might be in his power to afford concerning the man whose cause he advocated; "to enable the necessary inquiries to be made."

In this letter it was further stated that a "very liberal provision" is made "by annual vote of parliament for the pension and relief of invalid and disabled soldiers," including, it was implied, those "invalid and disabled soldiers" who are popularly supposed not to be entitled to any pension, by reason of too short a service. That these short-service men are, under certain circumstances, entitled to share in this "very liberal provision" was treated as a fact well known, or as one that ought to be well known: though if there be one thing about army matters less "generally known" than another, it is this same fact.

The "necessary inquiries"—involving, among other things, the old man's journey to Oxford, narrated above—having been made, and having proved satisfactory, the writer of the appeal to the Times, received, on the 12th of October, another letter from Chelsea, stating that "the man named in the margin" had "been granted a pension of ninepence a day," and that "the

necessary measures" would "be adopted for his being paid the same from the 11th of September inclusive, through the staff officer of pensioners for the district in which he resides."

In the mean time, subscriptions had been coming gradually in, in answer to the appeal in the Times of the 18th of August; thus the writer of that appeal was able to announce in the Times of October the 17th that the subscriptions would suffice to double the pension, if necessary, and would yet leave a small margin for investment in the savings-bank against sickness or other emergency.

The old ex-pauper Waterloo-man completed his seventy-fourth year on the eighteenth of October. He had heard of the full extent of his good fortune three days before; and, on the day after his birthday, the writer of these lines went to see him settled in his new lodgings: lodgings far more comfortable than he had hitherto been able to occupy.

"Well, Oliver," said the writer, "I hope you are quite happy and comfortable now?"

"Yes, sir, indeed I be. I haves my liberty. I can do as I like. I can take my walk when I like, and go where I like. I can go in and see my brother and sister when I've a mind. I'm a great favourite with the children—I allys was. I haves the respect of all the respectable people in and about the place—and them as bain't respectable, I don't care about."

#### BESET BY BUSHRANGERS.

SURVEYING and exploring a new district in Queensland, is a matter of some hardship and peril. In the evenings, after the day's work is over, when we have finished our "dampers," salt beef, and tea, and are smoking our pipes round a blazing log fire, many a strange story is told. My men are old Bushmen, and are up to a thing or two: especially My Chainman.

He is a harum-scarum, reckless, handsome, genuine Irishman of very respectable family, induced to emigrate many years ago as a hopeless scapegrace. He has knocked about New South Wales and Queensland in all sorts of capacities. I fell in with him by chance. I was fortunate enough to save his life, engaged him, and believe him to be as devoted and fine a fellow as there is in the world.

A few years ago, My Chainman was journeying in the direction of Sydney, from a place in the interior called, I think, Jimballah. Having stopped at several public-houses on the way, he found himself still on his journey with a ten-pound note, half a sovereign, and a half-crown, in his pocket. About a hundred miles from Sydney, he found some confusion in a public-house which he had entered to obtain refreshment. The landlady was crying bitterly, and the servants were in a great fright.

When he entered, the hostess eagerly exclaimed:

"You are not one of them, are you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Och, it's the Bushrangers I mane. *You* aren't one of *them*?"

"No. Have they been here, then?"

"Yes, half an hour ago, and cleared my house of all I had. Musha! The widdy's curse be upon them!"

"Have they gone down the road, or struck right into the bush?"

"Gone down the road to stick up all they meet wid."

"How many?"

"Three; sorrow less."

Now, My Chainman *must* go down to Sydney. He could not take the bush for it, as he did not know the country well enough. He might evade the Bushrangers by some lucky chance, either by the aid of night or other means. He was dressed, of course, in the gear of a thorough Bushman, and they might spare him on the old Scotch principle, "Hawks pyke not oot hawks' een." Besides, he might conceal his ten-pound note, and it would not break his heart to lose his half-sovereign and half-crown. On the whole, then, he saw nothing for it but to resume his journey. He chose his short sock as the best place for the bank-note, and thrust the note into it, without folding it up.

Forth he went, and rode rapidly on for about an hour without seeing the rangers; however, he distinctly saw the fresh tracks of *four* horses in advance. At an abrupt turn of the road, he was covered by three revolvers, and addressed by three voices:

"Dismount!"

No help for it. He got off his horse, and took a survey of the "glorious three." One was a very good-natured-looking fellow; the other seemed rather backward; the third was an unmistakable ruffian.

"Where have you been? You're a digger."

"I'm just coming from the Wanoorah Digger's."

These gold-fields were noted for their poverty.

"How much money have you got?"

"One half-sovereign and one half-crown."

"Is that all?"

"That's all."

It was the good-natured man who spoke in this dialogue.

"I think, Jim, we may let him off. The poor devil must be hard up, coming from those wretched diggings."

"We'll have something to say to him first," replied Number Three, whose accent was Irish; and this gave My Chainman some hope.

"Well, at all events, he must have a glass of grog." My Chainman accordingly drank a bumper that took his breath away.

"Walk before me into the bush," then said Number Three.

"Not a bit of it, Jim; let the poor devil go. Why, he's a countryman of your own. What do *you* say, Jack?"

"Never mind what Jack says!" replied Number Three. "Don't you make an ass of yourself, Dick! I'll have my way in this."

He motioned to My Chainman to go on; and on he went until they reached a belt of scrub.

"Halt! Now, listen to me. It's my opinion that you are a schemer. If I find one shilling on you more than you have acknowledged to" (he swore a terrific oath), "I'll blow your brains out on the spot. Strip!"

My Chainman owned to me that for a moment he felt a mortal terror, but he shook it off, and proceeded to undress.

"Take off your jumper first—not your boots. Now your flannel shirt. Throw them over to me."

He examined them thoroughly.

"Take off your boots. Throw them here. Now your trousers."

He found in the pockets the two coins. And my Chainman hoped that the search was over. Not yet.

"Take off your socks!"

To hesitate was instant death. The ruffian shook both the socks. Let the reader fancy the beating of My Chainman's heart, meanwhile! As he had thrust the note into the sock *without folding it up*, and as the robber had caught the note with the thick sock between his finger and thumb, it was thus prevented from dropping out. To such small things a man may owe dear life itself.

"Now be off."

"What!" said My Chainman. "Would you send a man away stark naked, and in this weather, too?"

"You ought to be thankful for your life."

Just then, up came Dick.

"Haven't you searched him yet? What the devil's the use of keeping him in the cold?"

"You mind your own business, Dick."

"Jim," retorted Dick, "you know I can stand a good deal; but you're not the man to bide a quarrel with me when I'm roused. I won't allow you to do as you did last time. Give this man his boots and trousers; keep his jumper, if you want it."

Thus they split the difference, and My Chainman was left on a bush-road without a horse, and only half clad. He had his ten-pound note, however.

After walking briskly for about twelve miles, he came to a sly grog-shop, where he found two men conversing; one, evidently the host; the other, (he knew as well as if it had been revealed to him,) was the *fourth* Bushranger.

In the endless wilds of Australia, there is not a Bushman whose life does not often depend on "tracking;" and so wonderful do Bushmen become in this respect, that they can tell the date of every mark upon the ground. I have heard them debate as to whether a black's track was an hour old, or two hours. Now, My Chainman had seen the tracks of *four* horses in company, and he had carefully tracked the fourth up to this "humpy," close to which it was standing quietly tied by the bridle.

"If I don't ride that horse away from this, to-day," said My Chainman to himself, "may I never have the blessing of St. Patrick!"

The host was a little man; the Bushranger was a tall and muscular villain, with long black hair falling down his shoulders—a bad sign, as it showed he had been long "out."

They had been talking on a subject that had excited the Bushranger, and that subject, as far as My Chainman could gather from the muttered words he overheard at his entrance, was that the police were on their way up, and not very far off.

My Chainman gave the masonic sign; it was answered by the host.

"Hallo," said the Bushranger, "where do you hail from?"

"I have come down the road."

"Haven't you got a horse?"

There was no use shamming here, so My Chainman at once replied:

"I was stuck up and robbed twelve miles from this, by the Bushrangers."

"The devil! Are they so near? Isn't it fortunate, Casey, that I know this in time?"

"Why?" said Casey. "You're not going that way; you came from that direction yourself a while ago."

The Bushranger at that moment was lighting his pipe with a burning coal, and his back was turned. My Chainman gave a look and made a gesture which were perfectly understood by the shrewd little host.

"I must be going, old man," said the Bushranger, after his pipe had been successfully lighted. "Let's have a glass of grog all round first."

"All right!" said the little man. Three glasses of rum soon stood before the party. My Chainman put his hand forward to take up one of the glasses, but Casey, with an awkward apology about helping the gent first, handed the robber that very glass, gave another to My Chainman, and drank off the third himself.

My Chainman understood all this, and hoped that the stupifying potion would soon take effect. But no. The ruffian's constitution was as sound as the foundations of St. Paul's, and the draught only increased his sharpness and penetration.

"Do you think I don't see through you?" said he, with a diabolical glance at Casey. "I'm not so sure of *you*" (this was to My Chainman); "if I was, I know what I should do."

"What have I done, sir?" said Casey.

"What have you done, you villain? Everything. I'll have your life!"

Now, although My Chainman did not think that the ruffian meant the threat literally, yet he made his little preparations. The fellow was armed to the teeth. He had two revolvers in his belt, and a double-barrelled gun stood close to him. A large sheath-knife hung on his hip. Every second increased the ruffian's fury. His curses and threats were appalling. Casey, the other side of the fire, sat the picture of dismay.

"Why don't you answer me?" the robber at last shouted.

"Because," gasped Casey, "I have nothing to say."

"Nothing to say?" roared the Bushranger. "Take that!"

He drew a revolver, half rose from his seat, and, with wonderful quickness, levelled the weapon at Casey. But My Chainman was quicker than he. He had quietly picked up an American tomahawk which lay on a block beside him, and, just as the Bushranger had given the half turn to fire, down came the tomahawk on the back of the neck. The pistol exploded at the same moment. The wretched man gave hardly a quiver. He was dead in a second. The two survivors looked into each other's faces.

"Of course he was a Bushranger?" inquired Casey, after a long pause.

"Of course he was," said My Chainman; and he then told him the whole story. "But even if he were not, I did it in self-defence, for he would have shot me the next minute."

"You saved my life, however," said Casey, "and that is everything to the purpose."

"I thought at first," said My Chainman, "that you were in league with the robbers."

"Probably I might have been forced to be so in time," was the reply; "but I have not been here long, and, rely upon it, I shan't be here long."

"What is best to be done?" said My Chainman. "Shall I ride on and meet the police, if they are on the way?"

"For the Lord's sake, don't!" exclaimed the other. "His mates are sure to be here in no time, and they'll torture me if they find this out."

"Get up behind me, and we'll both ride off," said My Chainman.

"Then I leave everything belonging to me to be plundered."

"Well, then, man, what is it you want? What's your advice?"

"Let us throw the body down that rock into the scrub there, and then clean up. You ride off. I'll pretend that their mate was after you. If you do meet the police, don't say a word about it."

"But the horse and saddle may be stolen property?"

"You must chance that. It's the only plan."

My Chainman adopted the only plan, rode down to Sydney, and sold the horse.

"But now, sir," said he, "comes the strangest part of the story, and, if I didn't feel sure that you would believe me, I would never tell it. Years passed, and I happened to be travelling through a town where the assizes were going on. I heard that a great murderer was to be tried, so I went to hear the trial. I did hear the trial. As I live and must die, one of the officials of that court, and not the lowest either, was Jim, the Bushranger who stripped me!"

"Of course you communicated your discovery to the police?"

My Chainman gave a dry cough, and, I rather think, got red in the face.

"I never much cottoned to the police, sir, at any time—least of all then. Not so much for my own sake as for others'."

"I see, I see," said I; "but I hope that was the only human blood you ever shed?"

"The only drop," said My Chainman, in some confusion, "saving and excepting one other case. That's a longer yarn than this."

## OLD STORIES RE-TOLD.

### THE LOSS OF THE KENT EAST INDIAMAN BY FIRE (1825).

DR. ARNOLD says, in one of his sermons, referring to this calamity: "Never was the faith and charity of martyrs shown more beautifully than in the Christian soldiers and sailors so nobly united amid the horrors of that scene in the service of God."

The dangers these brave men underwent were deeply sympathised with by the nation, whose courage and chivalrous fidelity they had so well illustrated, and millions of hearts will beat faster with pride and joy at the recital of their providential escape.

It is sometimes difficult to understand why certain events rouse a whole country, while others, apparently equally or more interesting, fail to excite any attention. There had been wrecks at sea, in which thousands more lives had been lost—losses far more heartrending in their suddenness and in the circumstances connected with them. In 1780, fifteen English vessels of war sank together in a tornado off the West Indies. In 1811, two English men-of-war struck on the iron-bound rocks of Jutland, and nearly one thousand of their seamen perished. Yet these catastrophes are now almost forgotten, and the loss of the Kent East Indiaman is remembered, and discussed with an interest that shows that sympathy in the event is still existing. Our nation is incapable of false sentiment or hypocrisy. There is generally a good reason for the emotion it evinces. There is always some peculiar heroism or pathos in any event which touches the national heart.

The Kent, a fine new Indiaman of 1350 tons, Captain Henry Cobb commander, bound to Bengal and China, left the English Downs before a fine fresh north-east wind on February 19, 1825. She had on board twenty officers, three hundred and forty-four soldiers, forty-three women and sixty children belonging to the Thirty-first Regiment, besides twenty private passengers, and a crew (including officers) of one hundred and forty-eight men, making a total of six hundred and forty-one souls.

Early on the 1st of March, eleven days from leaving England, the stately vessel, bewildered by a pitiless storm, lay-to under a triple-reefed main topsail only, having struck her top-gallant yards. The passengers were below, miserable and anxious; the women and children groaning



in their berths, and praying for a calm. The dead-lights were in, and the three hundred and forty-four soldiers, miserable and pale enough, were on deck, attached to the life-lines that were run along the deck for the purpose. The sailors, worn and apprehensive, were hard at work, under the eye of their indefatigable captain. About twelve o'clock the rolling of the ship became worse than ever, being increased by the dead weight of several hundred tons of shot and shell that formed part of the lading. At every lurch the main-chains were thrown deep under water, and the best cleated furniture in the cabin and cuddy (a large dining-room on a level with the quarter-deck) was dashed about with tremendous and dangerous violence.

Just before the morn, one of the ship's officers, wishing to ascertain if all was fast below, descended into the dark hold with two sailors, who carried with them a patent lantern. The candle in the lamp burning dim, the officer very prudently sent it up to the orlop-deck to be trimmed. Having then discovered a rum-cask to be adrift, he called to the sailors for some billets of wood with which to wedge it up. While they were gone, a heavy lurch knocked the lantern out of the officer's hand, and on his letting go the cask to snatch at the lantern, the cask stove, the rum flooded out, the light caught it and broke into a wide blaze—the *ship was on fire!*

For a long time the flames not spreading beyond a place surrounded by the water-casks, it was hoped they could be drenched out; but the light-blue haze soon turned to volumes of thick, brown, curling smoke, that, pouring through the four hatchways, spread through the cabins, and rolled along from the fore-castle to the quarter-deck. There was no longer any hope of suppressing the disaster, or concealing it from the passengers. Soon a strong pitchy smell pervaded the vessel; the fire had burned through to the partitions and sides of the hold. The sailors cried out, all together:

"It has reached the cable tier!"

Major M'Gregor, who had been reading the Bible to a friend, being told that the ship was on fire in the after hold, knocked gently at the cabin-door and quietly informed Colonel Fearon, the commanding officer of the troops. On deck, amid the smoke slowly rising, Captain Cobb and the other officers were already giving orders to the seamen and troops, who were working at the pumps, and passing buckets, and throwing wet sails and hammocks on the now irrepres-sible fire.

Many of the ladies below, seeing Major M'Gregor's anxious face and absorbed manner, and hearing the increased noise and confusion on deck, could not be pacified by the assurance that the gale was no worse. At this awful crisis, Cobb, firm, staunch, sagacious, preserved an imperturbable courage. Desperate measures were all that were left. He ordered the carpenters and the pioneers, ready with their axes, instantly to scuttle the lower decks, cut the combings of the hatches, and open the lower ports to the

full wash of the waves. The alternative now was between fire or water. If water could only be persuaded to fight fire (as in the old Arabian legends), and would then in pity, after her victory, refrain from sinking that unhappy vessel, the six hundred souls might still be saved.

The order was remorseless in its suddenness. There were a few lives to be sacrificed in order that many might be saved. The axes went to work, the timbers crashed in, over them and through them leaped the water, immediately drowning several sick soldiers, poor women, and shrieking children, whose cries were, however, in a moment stifled.

Colonel Fearon, Captain Bray, and other officers, as they descended to the gun-deck to assist in rapidly opening the ports, met staggering, in an exhausted and almost senseless state, through the dense choking smoke, one of the mates, who had just stumbled over the bodies of several men who had been suffocated. The moment the ports were opened the sea rushed in with cruel and eager force, carrying into the hold in its irresistible progress huge bulkheads and ponderous seamen's chests. The soldiers and sailors, knee-deep in water, tried to cheer each other by the hope that this immense quantity of water, which had already in some degree checked the force of the flames, might soon bring safety, the danger of the explosion of the spirit-casks and powder being now diminished.

The treacherous ally had, however, only brought death in a more sudden and silent form. The ship became water-logged, and presented many indications of settling into a terrible quietude, before going down headlong. A fresh impulse seized the desperate men; they tried to close the ports again, to shut down the hatches, to exclude the external air, and to rather wait for the slower vengeance of the fire. All hope was abandoned. Survivors afterwards thought of the noble lines of the great poet of the day:

Then rose from sea to sky a wild farewell,  
Then shriek'd the timid, and stood still the brave.

The upper deck was crowded with more than six hundred people, many of them sick, risen half naked from their beds, who were running about scared, and crying for husbands, children, and fathers. They were seeking them only to interchange prayers, and to die in each other's arms. Many were standing in silent resignation, some in stupid insensibility to the fast-coming death; others yielded themselves to tears, or screamed, and tossed their arms in a frenzy of despair. Many were on their knees, shouting prayers and ejaculations from Scripture, appealing with the most earnest gesticulations for mercy to Heaven. The Roman Catholic soldiers were crossing themselves, while a group of veteran soldiers and stout-hearted sailors, who had braved death all their lives, and despised his terrors in whatever shape, threw themselves down directly over the powder-magazine, in order to perish instantly in the explosion, now every moment expected: too brave to rush into

the ravening sea, they wished to avoid calmly the excruciating horrors of death by fire.

Captain Cobb, the brave Kentish man, full of thought, and imperturbable as granite, ordered the deck to be scuttled forward, in order to draw the fire in that direction, as there were several tiers of water-casks between it and the magazine, and the wet sails thrown into the after hold would prevent the fire spreading to the spirit-room abaft. To those who were cool enough to observe, the scenes rapidly passing were truly heartbreaking. In the after cabins on the upper deck some of the soldiers' wives and children were reading and praying with the ladies, who, being only half clothed, had taken refuge there. Many of these latter, and two young sisters in particular, preserved their self-possession, and, with firm reliance on God, comforted the others. One young man asked Major M'Gregor if there was any hope. The major replied, they must prepare themselves to sleep that night in eternity. The lad exclaimed, with fervour, as he pressed the major's hand, "My heart is filled with the peace of God; yet, though I know it is foolish, I dread exceedingly the last struggle."

There was no excitement of battle here to occupy and distract the mind. The unhappy creatures were rather like condemned men waiting the hour of execution. It was very affecting to see the little children in bed in the cuddy-cabins, smiling, and quite unconscious of danger, playing with their toys as usual, or asking innocent and unseasonable questions. One of the senior officers whispered to some of the older children, that now was the time to put in practice what they had been taught at the regimental school. They replied, with the hot tears running down their cheeks:

"Yes, sir, we are trying to remember them, and we are praying to God."

All exertions had failed; it was only left them to wait calmly for their terrible and agonising death. Few of the sailors or soldiers seemed to have either much hope or dread of a future state; so religious men present observed. Many, however, vowed, with loud and piteous cries that if their lives were spared they would dedicate themselves to good works; and others, filled with remorse, cried that the judgment was falling justly on them for the crimes and sins of their past lives.

While the crew of the Kent lay in this heart-rending position of physical quietude and mental terror, the waves rose higher and beat faster and more furious, as if impatient at the long struggle with their hopeless victims, and greedy to snatch from the fire their already half-drowned prey. All at once the binnacle, by a violent lurch, was torn from its fastenings, and the compass, with its now useless needle, was dashed to pieces on the deck. It seemed an omen of approaching death, and one of the younger mates exclaimed, with despair:

"What! is the Kent's compass really gone?"

A young officer was seen to quietly and

thoughtfully remove a lock of hair from his writing-case and place it calmly near his heart; while Major M'Gregor, writing a few lines to his father, enclosed it carefully in a bottle, in the hope that it might relieve those he loved from long years of fruitless anxiety and suspense. This bottle was, however, dropped in the cabin in the emotion of the next moment, and was forgotten. By a most singular coincidence, however, it floated from the wreck, and was afterwards picked up at Barbadoes.

All hope had now gone; but it occurred to Mr. Thomson, the fourth mate, during the lull, to send a man to the fore-top, rather in the ardent wish than in the expectation that a friendly sail might possibly be in sight. Eagerly the man clambered—eagerly all eyes were fixed on him in momentary hope; the despairing scarcely looked up to know on whom the eyes were fixed. The man swept the horizon with the long-searching practised glance of a sailor; but made no sign. Suddenly he threw his head forward and strained his eyes on one spot, without moving. It was a moment of unutterable suspense. All at once he said something.

Gracious God! Merciful God! He waves his hat. Silence!

Then down to the paralysed crowd below, fixed like statues with expectation, comes the clear sharp shout:

"A SAIL ON THE LEE BOW!"

Hope's rainbow springs up and brightens the air. Many burst into tears, and fall down in grateful prayer. Three ringing cheers break from the men; a faint smile of joy comes over the stern face of the captain, as, to hide his emotion, he gives quick and sharp orders to hoist flags of distress, to fire minute-guns, and to bear down under the three topsails and foresail still left upon the heaven-sent vessel. Women clasp their children; friends grasp hands; husbands and wives fly into each other's arms with tears of joy. The sailors hurry to their guns, and load and fire every sixty seconds.

The vessel proved to be the Cambria, a small brig of two hundred tons burthen, W. Cook captain, bound to Vera Cruz, and having on board twenty or thirty Cornish miners, and several agents of the Anglo-Mexican Company. But the danger was still imminent; the brig either did not observe the signal, or was not disposed or able to lend assistance. The wind was so tremendous that the Kent's guns could not be heard; but, at last, the Cambria slowly tacked—then hesitated. Then up went the British colours, the brig crowds all sail, and bears down to the relief of the burning vessel.

But the danger was still threatening and perilous. The Kent had been already a long time burning; the brig was extremely small, and there was a tremendous sea running for any boats that came to the rescue. It was certain that many must perish, and those who determined to be last felt even yet no hope left them of preservation.

"In what order are the officers to move off?" said Captain Cobb to Major M'Gregor.

"Of course in funeral order, the juniors first," was the brave reply.

"And see," said Colonel Fearon, "that any man is instantly cut down who presumes to enter the boats before the women and children."

The soldiers and sailors were already looking with wild and hungry eyes at the boats; a maddened rush seemed certain. The officers at once drew their swords, and stood by the starboard cuddy-port where the cutter hung.

The ladies and soldiers' wives were to go in the first boat. At about half-past two (four hours and a half from the breaking out of the fire), the women, hastily wrapped up, moved in a mournful procession from the after cabins to the cuddy-port. Amid the unutterable anguish of that sudden and, as it seemed, eternal parting, not a word or scream was uttered; even the infants ceased to cry, as if in emulation of their parents' courage. Only in one or two cases ladies plaintively entreated permission to die with their husbands; but on being told that every moment's delay cost a human life, they one by one tore themselves from their husbands' embraces, and were placed, without a murmur, in the boat, which was instantly lowered into a most dangerous and tempestuous sea. Twice, indeed, there came a cry from the chains that the boat was swamping. Captain Cobb, dreading this lowering—always a difficult work—had wisely placed a man with an axe to cut the tackle, if there was the slightest difficulty in unhooking it.

The order was given to "unhook," but the bow-ropes fouled, and the axe would not clear them. The moment was critical. The boat followed the motion of the ship, and in another instant would have been hanging perpendicularly by the bow, when just then a wave lifted up the stern, and enabled the quick seaman to disengage the tackle. The boat, dexterously cleared, launched out upon the waves, now a speck on the crest, now disappearing in the dark valleys between the billows.

The Cambria lay prudently at some distance from the Kent, dreading an explosion or the fire of her shotted guns, and the men had far to row. To better balance the boat, and to give the men freer play for their oars, the women and children were stowed close together under the seats, so exposed to the spray that they were soon breast-high in water, and the children all but drowned. It was a half-hour of dreadful anxiety for those on board the Kent.

There was still great difficulty and danger in getting the passengers on board the Cambria. "The children first," was the cry, and they were at once thrown up or handed from the boat. The women were then urged to avail themselves of every friendly lift of a wave to spring into the friendly arms held out for them. Only one lady came short in leaping, and would have certainly perished had she not caught a rope hanging over the Cambria's side, and saved herself till she could be dragged aboard. So great was the joy and gratitude among the husbands on board the Kent on seeing the safety of their wives and

children, that they for a time seemed to forget the storm over their heads and the fiery volcano beneath their feet.

As the Cambria's boats could no longer get alongside in such a heavy sea, it was determined to tie a child to every woman, and to lower them by ropes from the stern. The heaving of the vessel, and the extreme difficulty of lowering at the moment the boat was underneath, rendered it impossible to prevent plunging the poor creatures repeatedly into the water. No woman was lost, but the younger children nearly all perished from cold and exhaustion. The women wept silently over their dead children, half paralysed with the agony of their fear, and the anguish of the recent parting. Now the deaths grew more frequent, as the excitement and hurry increased, and the sun began to set, as if cruelly withdrawing his light from their great misery.

Amid this conflict of feelings and passions, roused to the utmost, many affecting episodes of parental and filial affection and of generous and unselfish friendship occurred. At that moment even the sourest cynic would have owned that human hearts are not all bad. Death began to claim his victims with terrible rapidity. Two or three soldiers, to relieve their wives of the care of several of their children, sprang into the water with them, and instantly perished. One young lady, who had hitherto absolutely refused to quit her father at his post, was not saved by the boats till she had sunk five or six times. Another soldier, having the horrible alternative of losing his wife or his four children, saved his wife, and was compelled to leave his four children to the fire. A fine young soldier, having no wife nor children of his own, insisted on having three children lashed to him, and flung himself into the water to try and reach the boat. He, however, failed, and was again drawn into the ship, but not till two of the children were already dead. One man fell down the hatchway headlong into the flames; another broke his back and fell overboard; a third slipped between the boat and the Cambria, and had his head crushed to pieces; and several other unfortunate men were lost in trying to clamber too hastily into the brig.

Captain Cobb and Colonel Fearon now seeing that it was risking the lives of all to delay with the women alone, who, being weak and terrified, took longer to escape, gave orders that a certain regulated number of soldiers should accompany each boat. Many soldiers, instantly leaping overboard in their eagerness to escape, were drowned in the general confusion. One poor fellow was just raising his hand to lay hold of the boat's gunwale, when the bow of the boat gave a sudden pitch, struck him on the head, and he sunk. This man's wife, to whom he was warmly attached, had hidden herself in the vessel at Deal, in order to accompany her husband.

One of the sailors, who had placed himself over the magazine, and there waited patiently for the long-expected explosion, now leaped up

in a rage, crying: "Well, if she won't blow up, I'll see if I can't get away from her!" He reached the boat in safety and escaped.

Three out of the six boats of the Kent were stove in, or swamped, during the day; one was full of men, who, it was supposed, had plundered the cuddy-cabins, and sank sooner from the weight of their ill-gotten spoil, which they now probably considered had become common property.

The danger was now increasing at a terrible rate. Darkness was coming on, and the flames were slowly but perceptibly extending. Colonel Fearon and Captain Cobb, therefore, felt fresh measures must be at once taken. A rope was slung from the end of the spanker-boom, and along this slippery spar, nineteen feet from the stern, the soldiers had to crawl and slide down into the boats that were tossing wildly some thirty feet below. If the man dropping failed to seize the right moment for falling, he swung in the air, fell into the sea, or was crushed by the returning boat. Dreading the dangers, many of the soldiers, now less restrained, threw themselves out of the stern windows, and were frequently drowned before reaching the boats. Rafts made of spars and hencoops were constructed and thrown overboard to help these fugitives, and to become a last point of retreat if the flames spread faster. The men were also advised to tie ropes round their waists, in order to lash themselves to the rafts. Even at this crisis the soldiers were scrupulous in asking leave before they cut the cordage from the officers' cots, and some of them, having discovered a box of oranges, would not slake their thirst till their officers had taken their share.

The officers began to leave the ship in prescribed order, with rigid discipline, and intrepid coolness—neither hurrying impatiently, nor ostentatiously refusing to go. A thoughtful man, who afterwards recorded his observations, mentions that, amongst the sufferers, there seemed no degrees of courage between high fortitude and frenzied cowardice. There appeared to be but two classes—those whose minds were raised to heroic endurance, and those who seemed paralysed, or driven into delirium by the sudden pressure and agony of an unusual danger. In the course of the day, many, however, who had been agitated and timid in the morning, rose by a great internal effort into positive distinction for courage, while others, at first cool and brave, appeared suddenly to experience a physical reaction and a collapse, and cast their minds prostrate before the danger.

Just at this time all eyes were fixed on the red setting sun. Should they ever again see it rise? was the thought preying at every heart. The cuddy, so lately the scene of kindly intercourse and gaiety, was now full of smoke, and deserted by all but a few men, who lay drunk on the floor, stupidly heedless of danger, or who prowled about like beasts of prey in search of plunder. Sofas, cabinets, and desks, lay shattered in a

thousand pieces. Geese and fowls that had got loose were cackling with hunger; while a solitary pig, broken from its sty in the fore-castle, was vainly routing at the Brussels carpet in one of the cabins.

As night advanced, the alarm and impatience increased tenfold. The timid and cowardly filled the air with their groundless or exaggerated reports of the fire. The soldiers began to tie towels and white linen round their heads, in order to be sooner recognised in the water; the sailors, more nimble, cool, and ready, had nearly all effected their escape. In the dreadful intervals between the boats (three-quarters of an hour), men, after a period of brooding, would burst forth into long lamentations, that only gradually subsided. They seemed like persons awoken from a nightmare. The oldest and coolest soldiers evinced no hurry to leave, no desire to remain behind longer than necessary.

The women had gone, the braver men had left; the residue were the cowards, and the baser and more excitable sort, whom nothing could arouse to becoming fortitude, and who refused to adopt the proper and prescribed means of safety. In vain Captain Cobb threatened and entreated; they still obstinately hesitated, begging and imploring to be lowered like the women had been. But this was impossible, for it was a slow process, and every moment was now valuable.

Between nine and ten o'clock the boatmen shouted that the wreck, long since nine or ten feet below the water-mark, had sunk two feet lower since their last trip. Colonel Fearon and Major M'Gregor, who had promised to remain to the last with Captain Cobb, prepared to leave, there being still three boats to fill. Out at once, one after the other, without pausing, they crept along the long tossing boom in the darkness, and in the blinding squall of wind and rain. The other landsmen still dared not follow, and remained to die horribly. When they got towards the end, the wind was so violent that the three men despaired of reaching the rope. The first was twice plunged over his head in the water; the second, Major M'Gregor, noticing that it was dangerous to drop down the rope as the boat was inclining towards the person descending, waited till the boat receded, and so dropped safely into it as it swayed back, without being either drenched or bruised. Colonel Fearon, the third, was drawn under the boat, struck against it, and was at last dragged in only by the hair of his head, almost senseless and alarmingly bruised.

Captain Cobb still remained on board, generously urging the few dumb and powerless wretches that remained to pass on along the boom, on which they crowded. But finding all entreaties useless on such men—many of whom, however, had previously shown courage—and hearing the guns—their tackles bursting in the flame—fall and explode in the hold, instantly saw the moment had come when he could do no more. He therefore sprang on the boom, seized hold of the



topping lift or rope that connects the driver-boom with the mizen-top, and passing over the heads of the infatuated men, dropped himself into the water, and escaped.

Yet even then a boat from the *Cambria* remained under the Kent's stern, her crew expostulating and entreating those on board, till the flames, bursting from the cabin windows, almost scorched the oars; nor would the captain of the *Cambria* let the boat come alongside his ship till he was sure that no hope was left.

Some of the Kent's crew were less generous in their self-devotion, and refused again to venture their lives. Still the boats did not cease to ply between the *Cambria* and the wreck, until one of the three boats left had to be plugged with soldiers' jackets, another had had its bow stove, and the second was so torn as to make it necessary to lash the oars to the cutter's ribs.

The scenes on board the *Cambria* were beyond the painter's and the poet's powers. The most passionate joy alternated with the most wild despair as the death of husbands or of children was announced, or as some saved man rushed into his wife's arms. But all these conflicting feelings were arrested by the last tremendous tableau of destruction and death. From that doom some had just escaped; in that doom the husbands or children of others were passing from them in torture.

The last boat had hardly arrived, when the Kent, three miles distant, showed flames spreading fast along the upper deck and poop, and flashing like lightning up the masts and rigging, till all became a pyramid of flame, that crimsoned the sky and shone red upon the *Cambria's* sails. The flags of distress, hoisted so hopefully in the morning, were seen waving amid the fire, till one by one the masts fell like stately steeples over the ship's side. About half-past one the flames reached the magazine; there was a violent explosion, the blazing timbers of the Kent flew like rockets into the air; and then came a horrible darkness that seemed deeper and blacker than before.

In the mean time, the frightened and despairing men left on board the Kent were driven by the advancing flames to the chains, till the masts fell crashing overboard, and they then clung to them in the water in horrible suspense for some hours.

Help was approaching. About twelve o'clock the watch of the barque *Caroline*, on her passage from Alexandria to Liverpool, observed a bright light on the horizon, and knew it at once to be a ship on fire. There was a heavy sea on, but the captain, instantly setting his maintop-gallant-sail, ran down towards the spot. About one, the sky becoming brighter, a sudden jet of vivid light shot up; but they were too distant to hear the explosion. In half an hour the *Caroline* could see the wreck of a large vessel lying head to the wind. The ribs and frame timbers, marking the outlines of double ports and quarter-galleries, showed that the burning skeleton was that of a first-class Indianan. Every other external feature

was gone; she was burnt nearly to the water's edge, but still floated, pitching majestically as she rose and fell on the long rolling swell of the bay. The vessel looked like an immense cage of charred basket-work filled with flame, that here and there blazed brighter at intervals. Above, and far to leeward, there was a vast drifting cloud of curling smoke spangled with millions of sparks and burning flakes, and scattered by the wind over the sky and waves.

As the *Caroline* approached, part of a mast and some spars, rising and falling, were observed grinding under the weather-quarter of the wreck, having become entangled with the keel or rudder-irons, and thus attaching it to the hull of the vessel. The *Caroline*, coming down swift before the wind, was in a few minutes brought across the bows of the Kent. At that moment a shout was heard as if from the very centre of the fire, and the same instant several figures were observed clinging to a mast. The sea was heavy, and the wreck threatened every moment to disappear. The *Caroline* was hove-to to leeward, in order to avoid the showers of flakes and sparks, and to intercept any boats or rafts. The mate and four seamen pushed off in the jolly-boat, through a sea covered with floating spars, chests, and furniture, that threatened to crush or overwhelm the boat. When within a few yards of the stern, they caught sight of the first living thing—a wretched man clinging to a spar close under the ship's counter. Every time the stern-frame rose with the swell he was suspended above the water, and scorched by the long keen tongues of pure flame that now came darting through the gun-room ports. Every time this torture came the man shrieked with agony, the next moment the surge came and buried him under the wave, and he was silent. The *Caroline's* men, defying the fire, pulled close to him, but just as their hands were stretching towards him (latterly the poor wretch had been silent), the rope or spar was snapped by the fire, and he sank for ever.

The men then, carefully backing, carried off six other of the nearest men from the mast. The small boat, only eighteen feet long, would not hold more than eleven persons, and indeed, as it was, was nearly swamped by a heavy wave. In half an hour the boat bravely returned, and took off six more.

The mate, fearing the vessel was going down, and that the masts would be swallowed in the vortex, redoubled his efforts to get a third time to the wreck. While struggling with a head sea, and before the boat could reach the mast, the end came. The fiery mass settled like a great red-hot coal into the waves, and disappeared for ever. The sky grew instantly dark, a dense shroud of black smoke lingered over the grave of the ship, and instead of the crackle of burning timbers and the flutter of flames, there spread the ineffable stillness of death.

As the last gleam flickered out, Mr. Wallen, the mate of the *Caroline*, with great quickness of thought set the spot by a star. Then, in

spite of the danger in the darkness of floating wreck, he resolved to wait quietly till daylight, and ordered his men to shout repeatedly to cheer any who might be still floating on stray spars. For a long time no one answered; at last, a feeble cry came, and the Caroline's sailors returned it loudly and gladly. What joy that faint cry must have brought to those friendly ears! With what joy must the boatmen's shout have been received!

When day broke, the mast was visible, and four motionless men could be seen among its cordage and top-work. They seemed dead, but as the boat neared, two of them feebly raised their heads and stretched out their arms. When taken into the boat, they were found to be faint and almost dead from the cold and wet, and the many hours they had been half under water. The other two were stone-dead. One had bound himself firmly to the spar, and lay as if asleep, with his arms round it, and his head upon it, as if it had been a pillow. The other stood half upright between the cheeks of the mast, his face fixed in the direction of the boat, his arms still extended. They were both left on the spar. One of the Indianman's empty boats was also found drifting a short distance off. The wind beginning to freshen and a gale coming on, it was all the jolly-boat could do to rejoin the Caroline. There could be no doubt that when the Caroline hove-to and luffed under the lee of the Kent, it must have passed men drifting to leeward on detached spars. They of course all perished in the rising storm.

In the mean time, the brig Cambria, unconscious of these scenes of hope and despair, was making sail, and running at the rate of ten knots an hour back to Old England. The shrewd Yorkshire smelters and brave Cornish miners having dragged the last of the exhausted survivors on board, had shared with them their clothes and provisions, and surrendered their beds to the naked and half-famished women and children.

The people of the Kent were still in a condition of great misery and danger. Even now their ultimate safety was by no means sure. A gale of wind was blowing, and six hundred human beings, several hundred miles from any accessible port, were crowded into a small brig of two hundred tons. In a little cabin, built to hold ten persons, there were now huddled nearly eighty, who had scarcely room even to sit. The brig's bulwarks were driven in, and the seas beat so dangerously that the hatches could only be lifted off between the return of the waves. No lights would burn below in that polluted atmosphere, and the steam arising from the breathing excited at one time an apprehension the ship was on fire. The men on deck were standing half naked, and ankle-deep in water. Infants were crying for the milk their mothers could not give them, and many of the children and elder women were seized with fits. In the midst of this misery, a soldier's wife was delivered of a child, which was christened the Cambria, and survived. If the

wind abated or changed, and the Cambria had been long kept in the open sea, famine and fever must have soon claimed their victims.

The gale continued with greater violence, and Captain Cook, crowding all sail even at the risk of carrying away his masts, nobly urged his vessel forward, and on the afternoon of the 3rd the cheering cry from aloft of "Land! land!" brought joy to every heart. That evening the Scilly light gleamed out brightly, and running rapidly along the purple granite coast, the Cambria joyfully cast anchor in Falmouth about half-past twelve on the following morning.

On reviewing this terrible calamity, it will be seen at once that the same gale which caused the first accident also contributed to the safety of the Kent's crew and passengers, as, but for the heavy rolling that enabled Captain Cobb to at once inundate the hold, the vessel would have burnt away before the Cambria's boats could have reached it. There were also many other singular and providential circumstances attending the event. The Cambria, which had been unexpectedly detained in port nearly a month, had that morning completely changed her course, and taken an opposite tack, to give the distressed and labouring brig some ease. The Kent had sighted no vessel before, nor did the Cambria see another till she entered the chops of the Channel. It was also remarkable that the fire, though undisturbed, should have been eleven hours reaching the magazine, the spirit-room, and the tiller-ropes. Had the Cambria, too, been homeward-bound, she would not have had food enough on board for one meal, and if she had had a full cargo, there would not have been time in that heavy weather to stow even three hundred of the six hundred survivors, and many must have perished.

The people of Falmouth overwhelmed the sufferers with kindness. The Governor-General of Penderennis Castle took instant steps for the disembarkation. The ladies formed, as before, the vanguard; then came the haggard, cold, wet, and half-clothed soldiers and sailors; lastly, the officers, beggared by the loss of their stores, and on them the compassionate and warm-hearted Cornish people pressed hats, shoes, and coats, as soon as they reached the shore. Every private house was thrown open, subscriptions were collected, clothes provided for the women and children, and mourning found for the poor widows and orphans. The sick and wounded were sent to the hospital, and the crew sent home with money provided by Captain Cobb. In all these good works the Quakers of Falmouth were especially active.

On the Sunday after their arrival, all the officers, passengers, ladies, soldiers' wives, soldiers, and sailors went to church to publicly thank God for their deliverance, and a touching sight it was. On the 13th the regiment embarked for Chatham, where the commander-in-chief allowed them a period of relaxation and rest before they re-embarked for India and China.

A piece of plate was presented to Captain Cook, of the *Cambria*, by the officers and passengers of the Kent, and the Duke of York publicly thanked him for his humane zeal and promptitude. The secretary of war (Lord Palmerston) authorised a sum of five hundred pounds to be given to the captain and crew of the *Cambria*, and the agents of the ship were also paid two hundred and eighty-seven pounds for provisions, two hundred and eighty-seven pounds for passengers' diet, and five hundred pounds for demurrage. The East India Company awarded six hundred pounds to Captain Cook, one hundred pounds to the first mate, fifty pounds to the second mate, ten pounds each to the nine men of the crew, fifteen pounds each to the twenty-six miners, and one hundred pounds to the ten chief miners for extra stores, to make their voyage out more comfortable. The Royal Exchange Assurance gave Captain Cook fifty pounds, and his officers and crew fifty pounds. The subscribers to Lloyd's voted him a present of one hundred pounds; the Royal Humane Society awarded him an honorary medallion; and the underwriters at Liverpool were also prominent in their liberality.

So ended the last scene of a calamitous event, attended with the loss of eighty-one persons.\*

#### A DANGEROUS HAND.

HAVE you ever been in Switzerland? No? Then go to Thun, one of the drollest little towns in the world, and one of the pleasantest. It stands in a noble park—the valley of the Aar—and at the extremity of an ornamental piece of water designed by the very First of Landscape Gardeners. The houses and the streets have entered into a conspiracy with the mountains, with the lake, the clouds, and the river, to fascinate and detain the onward traveller, that he may leave a little of his cash in the place. Every nook and lane is a gem begging the photographer to come and copy it; every opening is a scene, every wide space a panorama.

The town of Thun itself, small yet varied, quaint yet pretty, is one of the most original habitations of men. The balconies, the arched projecting roofs, and the pointed turrets, run each other hard in their rivalry for the prize of attractive coquetry.

It was at this same Thun that I first caught sight of her. Now, happily, I have the right to say *her*. You have seen, at some theatre, a lovely fairy, in a pork-pie hat, step out suddenly from behind the wings, charming all the male beholders ranging between the ages of fourteen and four-score. That morning, the drying-ground, a little below the market-place, was full of sheets—twenty times more than would be required to serve as screens for a Private Theatricals. Behind them, I heard a silver voice which said,

\* One woman, twenty-five children, one seaman, and fifty-four soldiers.

"This way, papa! I am sure this is the way to the Freienhof."

And then there came forth from behind the white curtain a vision which made me forget everything else. I had of course seen pretty girls before, but I had never yet seen *my* pretty girl. It was not the fair, clear complexion, nor the flaxen hair, nor the coral lips, which shot the dart; but it was the bright, spontaneous way in which those hazel eyes met mine; the extraordinary quickness with which we exchanged a glance; the slight blush and the gentle smile which followed as her eyes dropped immediately afterwards; and the involuntary halt, as if one had something important to say and the other expected something important to be said. As for papa, I don't think I saw him at all *that* time. You have heard of love at first sight? That is just what it was.

They went their way, through the tiny market, into the street; and I think I remember that she walked very slowly, as if she would have been glad to sit down and rest. I was nailed to the spot, looking after her until she was out of sight. Of one thing only was I thoroughly conscious. I had seen my wife, if ever I was to have a wife. That face, that figure, and that voice, had a rent in the clouds of futurity through whose long perspective a secret presentiment showed me my future. Talk of your magic mirrors, your enchanted crystals! Talk of distant events revealed in drops of ink! There is no magic like a sympathetic glance.

The way to the Freienhof! It was the very hotel I was staying at. But the direction they took was *not* the way to the Freienhof. Were they going for a stroll of discovery, or had they merely mistaken their way? Time would show. Saith the proverb, "Everything comes to him who can wait." I could wait; and did wait where I was.

While wondering at, though perfectly understanding, the novel ferment which then was working within me, my field of view was crossed by a solitary individual who was proceeding onward with uncertain steps. His make-up was fashionable, though perhaps a little seedy; but that tells for nothing on a continental trip. His black hair might be a little too ringletty; his whiskers a little too Dundrearyish. His hat had contours and lines of beauty in its rim more suited to Rotten Row than to searches after the picturesque. He made you doubt whether he were a *very* gentlemanly man indeed, or not a gentleman at all. You must have seen him on some race-course, or somebody excessively like him. The face looked a little tired and worn; but it bravely carried the cast-iron smile which is peculiar to opera-dancers and people of the world obliged to play the part of universal amiables.

"I *beg* your pardon, sir," he said, perceiving me. "I *really* beg ten thousand pardons; but *would* you do me the very great favour to tell me the way to the Freienhof?" He italicised

those words with a melodious drawl. "My friend, Sir Charles, who brought me to Thun in his carriage, tried to persuade me to remain at the Bellevue. Charming house, excellent table, magnificent view, good society! Quite, in short, *my* style of thing, sir. But, although the Freienhof is only second-rate, I had promised to go there—*promised*, sir. And when a lady is in the case——"

"Hang the fellow and his confidential talk!" I grumbled to myself. "What a nuisance, to be so interrupted! At such an interesting moment, too!" So raising my hat, I coldly answered, "You have only to go straight forward; take the first turn to the left, and you will reach the Freienhof."

"*Much* obleegeed; *very* much indeed," he rejoined, with treacley suavity. "Such kindness to an utter stranger! Pray do me the honour to accept my card. *You* are doubtless at the Bellevue? *You* are not going to the Freienhof?"

"No, I am not, sir," I fear I growled; internally adding, "until I think proper."

"I thank you very much. This way, I think?" And, with a honeyed bow, he took his leave.

"Mr. Percy Howard!" I muttered, looking at the card, which I had not been able to avoid receiving. "Every Howard kins with Norfolk's duke. For me, you are too mealy-mouthed. But what has become of the other parties?" I had not very long to wait. As I expected, the father and daughter had taken the wrong turn, and were now retracing their steps. She did not seem in the least surprised to find me lingering there; nor did he, for he had never given me a thought. Now, or never, was the time to make an attempt at *something*.

"Pray excuse me, sir," I said, a little flurried, "but I think I overheard you mentioning the Freienhof Hotel. I am staying there, and this is the way to it. You can reach it almost immediately. But it is still two hours to the table d'hôte dinner; and if—if you are not too tired, there is a wonderful prospect close at hand, which will well repay you for the trouble of mounting to it!"

"Indeed! What do you say, Maria? Do you think you can manage a little climbing?"

"I should like it above all things. Ever since I caught sight of it, I have been wishing to get a better view of that brilliant white mountain—the Blümlisalp, I think."

"Very well, my dear. Let us go to the inn, and ask them for a guide to the spot which the gentleman is so obliging as to——"

"Quite needless, sir," I interposed. "I was proceeding there when I saw you pass [a freak of fancy ordinarily known as a fib]; and, if you allow me, I will lead the way."

"Is it far?" the papa replied. "Is it steep?"

"Neither one nor the other. To reach the point of view, we have only to mount this long covered staircase by a series of low steps which are suited almost for children's feet. Is the young lady beginning to feel tired?"

"Not in the least. But if I were, here is a landing-place which will give us a minute's breathing. How curious! It is the centre of five different staircases, some running up, and some taking you down."

"This one is ours. Let us follow it. We have reached the cemetery, and have no further to climb. We have only a few steps to take on level ground; and now, if you please, look forward."

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed, after a few moments' pause; "I had no idea, until now, that the earth was capable of so much beauty. Never, never shall I forget this day." After gazing again at the view, she bestowed on me a look of thankfulness which was worth all the compliments in the world. This noble sight, enjoyed in common, had set its seal on our companionship. We had already grown almost intimate. It was understood between us two that we were friends, if not something more.

"It certainly is fine," assented the senior. "Mr. Howard would describe it in his most flowery style."

"Yes," said Maria, "he would indeed; for he is not afraid to talk about what he does not understand. He confounds Romans with Greeks; and, on being made aware of his mistake, slips out of it by calling them both the ancients."

"You are prejudiced, my dear, against him. You must try and get over your dislike. I wonder, by the way, if he has arrived."

In Swiss travel there is a peculiarity which is pleasant or not, according to circumstances. If you are there on any social speculation, to marry off your daughters, to make acquaintances you would not be likely to pick up at home, to light upon friends by unexpected chances, you can't have a better place of meeting, nor a surer rendezvous; but if your real aim be the beauties of nature, to be enjoyed in poetic retirement and quiet, you are liable to interruption.

The fact is, that, as everybody except the climbers of unclimbed peaks is pursuing a beaten track from which there is little deviation, if you meet an individual once, you are almost sure to fall in with him again. On steamer, in diligence, at glacier foot, by waterfall, you find faces which have accompanied you throughout your itinerary. If *you* do the Wengern Alp, they go too; if you go to see the Giessbach illuminated, you behold there physiognomies which you have already beheld reflecting daylight at Lucerne, Berne, or Interlaken. If you like the faces, well and good; if you don't, their tracking your heels so closely becomes wearisome. The only means of escape from such comrades is to stop somewhere for a week, and let the stream pass. The summer current will bring in a supply fresh from the inexhaustible springs of British life.

In this way, even before they entered Switzerland, my charmer's father had picked up Mr. Howard; while Mr. Howard had not the least intention to loose his hold of his new acquaintance.



Hence their expectation of meeting each other again at Thun.

The slightest possible shade of annoyance at her parent's partiality for his new-found friend, overspread *her* face for an instant, and then she glanced again at the landscape. Turning to me, she asked, "What is that mountain which stands before us—that dark green pyramid, clothed at its base with thick festoons of pine-tree forest?"

"That's *my* mountain—my beloved Niesen. Everybody loves the Niesen. 'All round the Niesen' is a toast as popular here as 'All round the Wrekin' is in Shropshire. Niesen is a favourite name to confer on dogs and railway locomotives. Long live the noble Niesen! I stood on his top the other day."

"Indeed! Is it possible?" Maria exclaimed, regarding me, in her innocence, as an Alpine hero.

"It is not only possible, but so easy, that *you* can make the ascent if you choose."

"Really! I should enjoy above all things to be able to say I had ascended a mountain."

After some discussion, the gentleman agreed that the ascent should be made. "By the way," he continued, "my name is William Greenwood, of the firm of Greenwood, Darkins, and Blake, Manchester."

"And mine, sir, is Henry Carter, son of the late John Edmund Carter, formerly of Manchester, latterly of Liverpool."

"Really! I remember your father failed in my debt, giving a dividend of eight and sixpence in the pound."

"Yes, sir, he did; and five years afterwards paid you in full, with interest."

"True; like an honourable man as he was. To think of meeting poor Carter's son in this way, by chance! He left you, I believe, not so very badly off?"

"I am rich, by living within my income."

"And you are strolling about here, I suppose, like the rest of us, without any definite purpose?"

"I am trying to put a little method into my trip by comparing, for my own private satisfaction, the respective merits of several well-known eminences which are reached on foot with no great exertion. I scramble from one hill-top to another, and note which pleases me best."

"The volume under your arm is doubtless your guide-book. There are so many, that it is difficult to choose between them."

"It is nothing so common-place as that, but a resource for a rainy day or a leisure hour. It is the *Mysteries of the Hand*, by Desbarrolles, in which the science of Chiromancy is fully and seriously expounded."

"A revival of an old delusion. But if people *will* pry into futurity, one form of the folly is as good as another. You will tell as about it by-and-by; it is time now that we think of dinner."

At dinner, I had the great satisfaction of securing the seat next to *her*. Opposite to us

was Mr. Percy Howard, looking anything but pleased at the favour I enjoyed. Maria (that I now knew to be her delightful name) did not like him more than I did, and received his advances with undisguised coldness. I fancied I observed that the waiter behind us was strange in his manner towards him, as if Mr. Howard paid too particular attention to the polish of the forks and spoons within his reach. To the discussion of our Niesen project Mr. Howard listened with open ears. It was agreed that I should go forward to Wimmis, the village at the base of the mountain, to secure horses up it, and bedrooms in the little hotel at its top, and that they would drive there early the following morning to commence the ascent immediately.

Next day, I bade a brief good-bye to the father and daughter, and reached Wimmis, where every arrangement was speedily made. During the inn-gossip of the afternoon, singular inquiries were put to me respecting the strangers then at Thun. I answered them as well as I could, but what in truth was uppermost in my mind was the expected arrival of my fair one to-morrow.

The morrow came, and with it my new friends; but they were not alone. Mr. Howard had fastened himself upon them, and with him a gentlemanly young fellow enough—rather too finespun—an acquaintance of his, whom I had noticed at the table d'hôte. As soon as they alighted, we set off, myself alone on foot, the rest of the party on horseback.

The ascent of the Niesen was glorious. Maria (by whose side I walked, telling her guide to proceed in advance) was in ecstasies at the harmony of sights and sounds, at the tinkling of bells from cows and goats, and the stream of the Simme rushing below. Every turn of the zig-zag path presented us with a fresh point of view. As we mounted higher, all was repose; soft colours—melting hues of green and brown—met our delighted eyes. The air was pure and balmy; our minds, elevated by the scenery, entirely forgot the lower world, the roar of city carriages, and the busy hum of men.

We met sledges laden with mountain cheese, gliding down gently over the grass; we passed men carrying on their shoulders loads of wine and other provisions for consumption at the summit. We scaled, one after the other, the three separate masses which together constitute the Niesen. Near the top, I crept down a rock, and was suddenly lost to my companion's view. Maria uttered a pretty little scream, highly flattering to my self-importance. Soon returning, I had the pleasure of presenting her with a handful of snow.

At last we reached the highest pinnacle. I make no attempt to describe the panorama it commands. It made us regardless of everything else, I believe, except each other's presence. We drank in with our eyes the snowy peaks, the outspread lakes, the meandering streams. And

then—and then—the Alpine air reminded everybody that meal-time was approaching. The little hotel, crouching in a hollow not far from the top, opened its hospitable doors. We dined. While dining, a cloud enveloped the mountain. So the evening had to be beguiled with talk, in the course of which Mr. Greenwood referred to my studies in palmistry.

It was only natural that so obsolete an art should be disdainfully regarded by Mr. Howard and his friend.

"Will you look at my hand, by way of experiment?" asked the fine young gentleman, with a mixture of curiosity and contemptuous defiance. "Tell us, if you can, what it indicates."

"I need not look at it; I have only to take it," I replied, passing his hand between my own. "Its character is apparent to the touch. Its objects, tendencies, and occupations may be summed up in one word, *Pleasure*." The fine young gentleman withdrew his hand from mine, and turned as red as a fresh-boiled lobster.

One minute longer," I said, resuming it. "There are also good points about it which only require exercise and development. There is no want of intellect. There is also right-mindedness and sense of duty which may one day get the upper hand of vanity and self-indulgence." The fine young gentleman, abashed and thoughtful, resumed his seat without a word.

"What do you read on this?" inquired Maria, blushing slightly as she offered her hand.

"I read a good deal," I gravely replied, after carefully examining first one hand and then the other. "You dearly love all those about you; and, when you marry, you will dearly love your husband. But I see a wilfulness which might compromise your happiness. You would risk a good deal, and might even sacrifice your real welfare, to have your own way in everything. That is your great danger—the spirit of domination. But I see correcting influences. You will direct ably, but you will also consult. You will consider other people's wishes as well as your own, when you find them reasonable."

During this horoscopic speech, Mr. Greenwood grew more and more attentive.

"You have hit off Maria neatly enough," he said. "Let us now see what you will make of me." So saying, he frankly held out his hand, turning back his coat-cuff, to display wrist and all. It was an honest, prepossessing-looking hand, independent of any rules of palmistry.

"This hand," I said, "is one in ten thousand. In the first place, sir, you are a lucky man. If you were not born with a silver spoon in your mouth, it very soon found its way thither. Ill-luck never strikes you; when it threatens to hit you, it glances aside. Your very losses have turned out gains in the end. Your life will be long; your health good, as it ever has been. Intriguers have never succeeded in taking you

in. You loved your wife tenderly; and you have never married again, only because you love your daughter with equal tenderness."

"Anybody can prophesy in that style," said Mr. Howard, impatiently, "without knowing much of the secrets of nature. There is little risk of making a blunder by supposing a young man in brilliant health and of ample means to be fond of pleasure; that a pretty girl should love her husband, after being loved by him; that an only daughter, with no mother to consult, should like to have her own way, as I am sure she ought; that a gentleman with a fortune should be fortunate, which is equivalent to saying that prosperity is prosperous. Chiromancy like that is a farce. A gipsy at a fair would tell you as much or more. As to long life, continued health, permanent welfare, and success—they are too pleasant not to be put into a prediction when there is any wish to ingratiate oneself with the parties practised upon."

"If I had seen in those hands the reverse of what I did, I should not have hesitated to say so. Still, your criticism is not without apparent foundation. I *may* seem to be making plausible guesses. That I have not spoken by guess, is easily proved; for here is the book I go by. I can quote you the rules it gives."

"Mere quackery; you will never convince me there is anything in it."

"I am not myself convinced that there is. The responsibility rests with Desbarrolles. He tells me that there is a hand which is essentially voluptuous, giving itself up to indolent indulgence, and yet ardent after pleasure. It is a plump hand, almost swollen; its fingers are smooth and tapering, thick at their base, and with no knots or irregularities of form. Its skin is white and glossy, looking as if dirt would not adhere to it, sunshine tan it, nor frost redden it. It is dimpled; the palm is fleshy, the root of the thumb very largely developed. It is generally regarded as a beautiful hand. I think your friend's hand answers to this."

"And so does every lady's and gentleman's."

"Then," said Mr. Greenwood, "let us now see what *your* horoscope reveals."

"No, indeed, the thing is *too* childish; it is *too* palpable a piece of foolery," Mr. Howard replied.

"At least by way of pastime," Maria pleaded.

"We ought all to take our turns," urged the plump-handed friend.

"Be it, then, as you please," said Howard, offering his hand with a very bad grace.

I looked at it for some time aghast; then took the other and examined it; and then let both drop without uttering a syllable.

"You give no opinion," said Mr. Greenwood.

"I would rather not."

"I thought how it would be," said Howard.

"He has got to the end of his palmistry."

"I do not wish to give unnecessary pain," I explained, "and on those hands I see things not pleasant to read."

"Out with them at once," said the friend. "They are harmless if they are not true."

"Well, then, if I must, I must. You will not be offended. The Line of the Heart is scarcely perceptible: faithlessness, evil tendencies. The Saturnian Line runs straight from the base of the middle finger quite up to the wrist: chances of imprisonment and other heavy tribulations. The Mount of Mercury excessively developed: adroitness, not always restrained by scruples; skill in the arts of daily life, in writing and caligraphy, for instance. I now understand what prompted you to take tracings of the signatures in the travellers' books at sundry hotels."

"Ah, yes! I am completing a friend's collection of autographs."

"This talent, combined with the evil influence of the forked and hooked Line of the Head, might tempt men less easy in their circumstances to procure cash by means of forgery."

"But, sir, there is a limit to pleasantry——"

"It is the book which speaks, not I. Here it is all, chapter and verse."

At that moment the waitress of the hotel entered, and presented Howard with a letter of business-like aspect.

He opened and read it. For an instant he seemed surprised, not to say stunned; but recovered himself immediately.

"How unfortunate!" he exclaimed. "How very mal à propos! I am obliged to leave your delightful society."

"Not to-night, surely?"

"There is no help for it. My friend, Lord Castellinthaïre, sends word that he is suddenly taken ill, and begs me to join him at Brienz as soon as possible. The worst of it is, that not only must I tear myself away, but I have left at Thun, with the bulk of my baggage, all the cash not required for this little excursion."

"That need not disturb you," said Mr. Greenwood. "I can let you have something till we meet again. How much will you like?"

"You are exceedingly kind. If we say ten pounds——"

"That is not enough. You don't know when you may get back to Thun. Take twenty; or, we'll say five-and-twenty. I have my cheque-book——"

"No, no, my *very* dear sir: no cheque, I thank you. I appreciate your kindness all the same; *indeed* I do. Ten pounds will be quite sufficient—*quite*."

"Yes; but my cheque-book! I had it a little while ago. It was in the pocket of my paletot, in the room where we washed our hands before dinner."

"Perhaps," I hinted, "by an accidental mistake, it has found its way into Mr. Percy Howard's paletot, not being able, in the twilight, to distinguish that gentleman's pocket from its own usual resting-place."

"Your joke is a little too absurd," said Mr. Greenwood, tickled at the notion nevertheless,

and handing with a smile a ten-pound note to Mr. Howard.

"*Very* much obliged," said the recipient. "But you, sir," to me, "do you mean to insult me?"

"It is not an insult," I replied, "nor yet a joke; but a serious suggestion. Do, if you please, feel in your pockets, and try if you cannot find it there."

"I shall do no such thing, sir," thundered Howard, simulating virtuous indignation, and working himself into a theatrical rage. "I am used to be treated as a gentleman; and were it not for the lady's presence——"

"Softly!" I said. "The case is very simple. Mr. Greenwood's cheque-book is missing. Oblige us by helping us to find it. Search if it has not wandered somewhere, quite by accident, of course. You have his ten-pound note; I am sure he has no wish to deprive you of it. But—did you notice my guide this morning?—the man who carried my knapsack up the Niesen? He is an agent of the Swiss police. The man who led Miss Greenwood's horse, and afterwards went on before us, is another. They are hunting up a little additional evidence against a person about whom they already entertain grave suspicions. They are in the house, within a moment's call. Shall we ask for their assistance to find the cheque-book?"

"Dear me! How very strange!" he ejaculated, with well-acted, because unblushing surprise. "Here it is! That I should not have felt it before! It must have fallen from your coat upon mine, and worked itself in, in the hurry of dressing. I am truly sorry that such a trifle should have caused us a moment's uneasiness. I am uncommonly delighted to have found it."

"And so am I," I dryly rejoined. "But allow me to hint that, however much we may regret to lose your company, the climate of Switzerland hardly agrees with you, and it might be prudent to change an air which is too sharp for you. Mr. and Miss Greenwood, as well as myself, would be sorry to see you—confined—to your room."

"You are probably right," he replied, unabashed. "I shall probably follow your friendly advice. The Alps do not quite suit me. It is a lovely evening—bright moonlight—for a leisurely stroll down the Niesen. I cannot miss the path. I shall leave the horse here, to avoid waking up the people at Wimmis; you can make use of it yourself to-morrow. I want no guide. Those men——" he hesitatingly added.

"I think you can do without either of them. They are probably supping below in the kitchen, and you can leave by the front door of the hotel. The Swiss authorities (who like things to go on smoothly) had just as soon avoid any unpleasantness which might have the effect of alarming strangers. I think they would not be displeased if you left their jurisdiction without being detained by any untoward event—arrested, for instance—by the severity of the weather."

"I am sure you are most considerate. By the

way, *would* you have the goodness to change this ten-pound note for French gold? It will be so much more handy."

"Most assuredly. Here it is."

"A thousand thanks. Good night. I wish you all a *very* good night."

He left the room with a most graceful bow, without a blush on his face or a falter on his tongue. He was gone. We looked at each other for a while in silence.

"Well, I never!" Miss Greenwood at last exclaimed.

"Nor I, exactly," rejoined her father.

"I suppose I have had a narrow escape from having the worth of my signature tested," the young epicurean quietly observed.

"But tell us," said Mr. Greenwood, "how you came to find out this gentleman's real character and avocations. It was not *all* chiromancy—eh?"

"Well, the facts are these. I had heard rumours at Thun. The Sunday evening I spent at Wimmis waiting for your arrival, I was alone. The showery weather kept me in-doors. No doubt you have been haunted by the ghost of a tune; that evening I was haunted by God Save the Queen. It would never finish. Just as the first strain was over for the twentieth time, and it was the second strain's turn to come on—Make her victorious, Happy and glorious—I heard it taken up by a chorus of voices without. Was it the force of imagination? I opened the window. No, it was not. At the foot of the Niesen, God Save the Queen is a popular air. When the chorus had died away, I left the window open, to enjoy the rushing sound of the Simme's waters and the wind whispering among the fir-trees. My thoughts were running on anything rather than Mr. Percy Howard's concerns, when grave voices in solemn debate rose from immediately beneath the window. I looked, and there was the Council of Village Notables assembled, standing in the open air in decorous order, in spite of the rain. One of the leaders was the landlord of the inn. Amongst other things, they discussed the expected presence of, and the measures to be taken with respect to, a suspicious stranger, who could be no other than our departed friend. After the meeting had broken up, the subject was resumed in the public room. The landlord advised forbearance and the avoidance of making any fuss, whilst another excited advocate for the purging Switzerland of *all* scum whatsoever, broke wine-glass after wine-glass by thumping them on the table to enforce his arguments. Between the two, I heard enough to remove from my mind all doubt or uncertainty. You have witnessed the sequel, and how chiromancy helped me to bring about the dénouement."

"And so the two men who acted as our guides are detectives on the track of our accomplished friend?"

"They are honest, simple, hard-working peasants, and no more policemen than you or I. It was a sudden idea of mine to invest them with that character, and you have seen the effect of a guilty conscience."

"But tell me now, seriously, Carter. Do you really believe in chiromancy?"

"I don't know enough about it to believe it. Without chiromancy, it is possible to form some opinion of the persons who cross our path. But you see at least that it is capable of furnishing a formidable weapon to artful persons. If it could but give me the hand of her I love, that is all I wish or care for."

Mr. Greenwood opened his eyes, and kept silence—the best move a man can make on many occasions. Perhaps he did not understand, I thought; or, understanding, was his silence consent?

I believe we all slept sweetly and soundly in that lone wooden inn on the top of the Niesen. We had agreed not to ask the sunrise to wait for us to witness it. We breakfasted together; took a last lingering look at the wondrous landscape spread around us; and then wended our way downwards. Aloft, was the silence of the wilderness; in descending, rural sounds again met our ears. There was the tinkling of bells worn by cows and goats, like distant village-peals ringing changes. The rush of waters and the rustling of leaves were once more audible.

On reaching the base of the mountain, Maria alighted from her horse. Taking her father's arm on one side and mine on the other, she said to him, "I have become acquainted with a secret, which ought not to remain a secret between us three. Mr. Carter and I am engaged, if we can only obtain your permission. Won't you let me have my own way, just for this once? Yes, dear father, I am sure you will."

Instead of looking immensely astonished, Mr. Greenwood kissed his daughter affectionately, and gave me a hearty shake of the hand.

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